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**BERNARD SHAW,**

A STUDY.



**THESIS**

Presented to the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Berne

by

*LOUIS SEGAL of London.*

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LONDON :

RECORD COMPOSITION CO.

47, FETTER LANE, E.C.

*This Thesis was accepted by the Faculty of Philosophy  
of the University of Berne on the recommendation of  
Professor Dr. Ed. Müller-Hess.*

Berne, July 22, 1912.

(Signed) PROFESSOR DR. J. HUBER,

*Dean of the Faculty.*

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*To Prof. Dr. E. Müller-Hess*

this

WORK IS DEDICATED,

*As a Slight Token*

*of*

*Great Esteem.*

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## THE REVOLT AGAINST ROMANCE.

I want him to do something, to be something besides a dreamer.

—*Charles Lever.*

In the prefaces to "Three Plays for Puritans," "Man and Superman," and in many other instances B. Shaw protests against romance on the stage and in literature. And, indeed, there is a great difference between B. Shaw and the romanticists on many important questions. To the romanticists love is a great deal, if not everything, and in the old romantic drama love occupied a principal position, while in that of B. Shaw it does not even occupy a secondary. To the romanticists love is the source of inspiration, the beginning and end of everything. But to B. Shaw love is only a sexual attraction, a trap cleverly laid for humanity by nature for the continuation of the race. The romanticists believe that love works miracles, and they paint the sacrifices the lover is willing to undergo for his lady love. But B. Shaw seeks to wreck this illusion. In the preface to the "Three Plays for Puritans" he says:—

"Not one of my critics but has seen a hundred times in his paper how some policeman or fireman or nursemaid has received a medal, or the compliments of a magistrate, or perhaps a public funeral, for risking his or her life to save another's. Has he ever seen it added that the saved was the husband of the woman the saver loved, or was that woman herself, or was even known to the saver as much as by sight? Never. When we want to read of the deeds that are done for love, whither do we turn? To the murder column; and there we are rarely disappointed."\*

Plato's ideas on the origin of the sexes and love is that of the romanticists. According to him mankind were not in their original divided into male and female as at present; but each individual person was a compound of both sexes, and was in himself both husband and wife melted down into one living creature. This union was very entire, and the parts

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\* Page xxvi.

very well adjusted together, since they resulted in a perfect harmony betwixt the male and female, although they were obliged to be inseparable companions. And so great were the harmony and happiness that the Androgynes (so Plato calls the men-women) became insolent, and rebelled against the gods. To punish them for their temerity, Jupiter could contrive no better expedient than to divorce the male-part from the female, and make two imperfect beings of the compound which was before so perfect. Hence the origin of men and women, as distinct creatures. But notwithstanding this division, so lively is our remembrance of the happiness which we enjoyed in our primeval state, that we are never at rest in this situation; but each of these halves is continually searching through the whole species to find the other half, which was broken from it. And when they meet they join again with the greatest fondness and sympathy.

But for B Shaw, as for many other philosophers, there exists a continual struggle between men and women, the women trying to marry the men, while the men are struggling for their independence and freedom. There is not a longing after harmony, a search after the lost part, but a fundamental disharmony of interests, a will to escape.

To the romanticists love is holy, super-human. To Schlegel it is the soul of the soul. Novalis believes love to be the highest reality, the beginning of everything. They feel a great longing after love itself, and it is to them the universal medicine that will cure all diseases.

Byron knows that "love creates love," and Shelley is longing to know whether there is love after death:

*Asia*: Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak, who die?\*

Again: "Love, Thought, and Breath," are to Shelley, "The powers that quell Death."

Love is to the romanticists the great teacher of man. Man becomes then conscious of himself, of his greatness, strength develops into *Man*. Jealousy is not the synonym of love, it is the reverse of it, as the shadow is the reverse of the substance, pain of joy, but which often accompany each other. It is the man in love who is going about and longing to achieve

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\* "Prometheus Unbound."

great things, he wishes to embrace humanity, the whole world. How many a great action was done only for love and for the sake of love!

There are eternal elements in love. That is why it will always be one of the main problems in comedy as well as in tragedy. But B. Shaw protests in the following words against the treatment of love in literature: "Let realism have its demonstration, comedy its criticism, or even Cawdry its horse-laugh at the expense of sexual infatuation, if it must; but to ask us to subject our souls to its ruinous glamour, to worship it, defy it, and imply that it alone makes our life worth living is nothing but folly gone mad erotically."\*

The romanticists do not want to see things, they want to feel them. They consider feeling a higher faculty than vision. In the northern fog, in the flight of the clouds, in the mist of the wood, and in the shadow of night, they hear and feel the great symphony of nature. But B. Shaw does not want to feel things, for him is everything brain work. To see the things in the proper light is most important to him. That is why he speaks of his normal vision which enables him to see things better than other people do.

To B. Shaw life is of more interest than art, while to the romanticists it is the contrary.

Unity is to the romanticists the highest ideal in life and they want to unite everything, while B. Shaw divides everything. There is no unity; everything is divided and in war with one another: the sexes, the family. The great romantic poet Novalis is creating his fairyland where Christianity will become united with heathenism, where men, animals, plants, stars, the constellation, the elements, tunes, colours gather, act, and speak like one great family. To complete the unity the loving couple want to bring the North to the South, combine Summer and Winter. They go to the East and West in order to unite Spring and Autumn. They bring together day and night, youth and age, and they marry the past to the future. The body should also become soul, and the soul body. The man is, to a certain extent, also woman, just as well as the woman is to a certain extent man. He unites even sleep and wakefulness. "Men will sleep and be awake at the same time,"

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\* "Three Plays for Puritans," page xxix.

says Novalis. And for F. Schlegel are "Life and Death really one and the same thing."

We see in them a desire to reconcile opposites, and to unite extremities. Already Nietzsche fights against the reconciliation tendency of the romanticists. Thus Zarathustra gives to poets insulting epithets for this preaching of peace and reconciliation, because he wants war. Also Ibsen in his most monumental work: "Brand," is fighting against the reconcilers, Brand wants to be a whole man, a unity, and he detests those that are half-and-halves, and not true to their own selves. That is why all misfortunes happen to Peer Gint because of his not being a consistent man.

Also B. Shaw is fighting against inconsistency, and his spokesman, Vivie Warren, says:

"It's better to choose your line and go through with it. If I had been you, mother, I might have done as you did; but I should not have lived one life and believed in another. You are a conventional woman at heart. That is why I am bidding you good-bye now. I am right, am I not?"\*

The romanticists are dreaming away their lives, while B. Shaw lives, and wants to live it consciously. They swarm for all ideals and idealism, while B. Shaw is fighting against it. Even Ibsen B. Shaw tries to interpret as a fighter against idealism, a thing which Ibsen never was.

Compare the romanticists to which woman is the ideal, the adored object of their dreams, and B. Shaw to whom woman is a boa-constrictor. He does not say with Thomas Moore: "'Tis life where thou art, 'tis death where thou art not;" or with Novalis: "The Heaven gave you to me for admiration. I pray to you. You are sacred, you are the eternal life to me."

Romanticism is to B. Shaw the great heresy against which we must fight; he considers it a youthful state which we must grow out. Henry Apjohn in "How He Lied to Her Husband," says:

"The process of growing from romantic boyhood into cynical maturity usually takes fifteen years. When it is compressed into fifteen minutes, the pace is too fast, and growing pains are the result."†

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\* "Unpleasant Plays," page 234.

† Page 137.



The romantic poets did not write comedies. Byron and Shelley, Novalis and Tieck, Pushkin and Lermontoff, all of them prefer tragedy to comedy. But B. Shaw is writing mostly comedies. The romanticists seek for beauty in the past. With a holy dread they wander through the magnificent vaults of past times, and they are longing to bring back the past, because they find great charm and beauty in it. But they do not remain cool spectators. They are inspired by it, and breathe life into it. Not only the style and colour of it do they imitate, but also the substance. They worship the past and collect its ruins, fables, and study its languages. The romanticists have rediscovered the past and they are its true fanatics. They are investigators, collectors, and translators of foreign languages and old literatures. They like traditions, old customs, Catholicism. The growth of the Catholic movement on the continent at the beginning of the nineteenth century was mostly due to the romantic movement.

In his attitude towards the past lies the main difference between B. Shaw and the romanticists. He looks for his inspiration to the future, not to the past. Even history is for him a shameful record which he wants to destroy, to burn, in order to build up with its ruins the future. Also he goes sometimes to the past for his inspiration, but not to glorify it, like the romanticists did, but to prove that things were just as bad then as they are at present.

Romanticism means the reawakening of the imagination, a reawakening to the sense of beauty. It was a progress because it had cast off the traditional bounds and limitations from art and literature, all the boundages that are destructive to real art. Whatever the faults of the romanticists may have been we must not forget that they represent one of the most important periods in human enlightenment. Seldom was there a period in Europe when so much was done for literature and art. Never lived so many free and great geniuses at one time. Never were the problems of life and death, religion and morality, science and art so deeply looked into as in that period. And not only by individual men, but by a whole literary generation.

But B. Shaw does not lack the ability of appreciating the romantic movement, and he does not fight so much against the romanticism of the last century as he fights against the epigons

of romanticism. He fights not against Byron and Shelley, but against the modern so-called romanticists that imitate only the outward form, but do not give the godly contents, the soul of it. Against these "romanticists" every true admirer of romantic literature ought to fight, because it is only a profanation of art. So we must not be surprised in the least at B. Shaw's reaction against the sentimental melodrama and the "governess" novel, because he sees how it spoiled the taste of the public. He complains of the demoralisation spread by bad theatre and vulgar novels. It is not love that they describe in their works, but erotics. They are erotic in the selection of the plot and in its treatment. All the motives are not of the soul, but of the body; not moral, but sensual. B. Shaw protests against the English novelists who:

"Like the starving tramp who can think of nothing but his hunger, seems to be unable to escape from the obsession of sex, and will re-write the very Gospels because the originals are not written in the sensuously ecstatic style."

We can say of B. Shaw that he philosophises with his head while he is romantic with his heart and all his feelings. He is a romanticist, perhaps, in spite of himself. When he is fighting against romanticism it seems as if he would try to convince himself first of all that he is no romanticist. And B. Shaw tells us himself that he is a dreamer.

"I can remember I have had to go to bed and shut my eyes to be and do whatever I pleased. What are the Bond Street luxuries to me, George Bernard Sardana-palus!"

Of all arts music is the most romantic. Indeed, to the romanticists everything is music. Even religion is music to Schleiermacher. "Music is the greatest sorceress," declares Tieck, "it intoxicates and makes me see wonders and believe in miracles." But also to B. Shaw is music the principal art, and it was one of his earliest passions. Already in his early youth he learned to understand and like it, and it was Wagner, this accomplished romanticist, whose music influenced him mostly.

Another man who had great influence on B. Shaw was William Morris, this regenerator of romanticism in the second half of the nineteenth century. And what other influence

could he have on him if not inspiring him for romanticism?

Another of his spiritual fathers B. Shaw declares the Irishman, Charles Lever, to be. Especially his novel, "A Day's Ride—A Life's Romance," to have influenced him.\* Is this novel not hopelessly romantic? The hero of it, Mr. Potts, leaves his home for a day's ride, and is thrown about the world for a life long. In this novel, just as well as in the other works of Lever, is reflected the whole Irish life. Potts, as another of Lever's heroes, Harry Lorequer, are not active men which know what they are after. They do not even intermingle the world of dreams with the world of reality. They are romanticists which are always dreaming. Instead of taking the shortest and simplest way to achieve their desires we see them driven about by fate and accident from one place to another, from adventure to adventure. The similarity between B. Shaw and Lever is not only that their works indicate real knowledge of life, genial and spontaneous humour, and a great power of presenting character; but they have also in common their fight against romanticism although being true romanticists themselves.

B. Shaw is an Irishman, and does he not tell us himself that all Irish are dreamers? His early novels, what are they if not romantic productions? The love of the prize-fighter, Cashel Byron, with the accomplished lady, Lydia Carew. The love of the mechanic Konolly with the aristocratic Marian Lind, or the plot of his "Unsocial Socialist," what is it if not romance?

"A philosopher, like a lyrical poet, must speak about himself," says F. Schlegel. And B. Shaw has done it, as he himself confesses that he spoke often and mainly about himself. Even his "Quintessence of Ibsenism" and "The Perfect Wagnerite," in which he pretends to explain the two geniuses related to him, are really explanations of himself. And this is also a characteristic feature of the romanticists that they look only for themselves, and they see only their own images reflected everywhere. Because to them the I, the subject, is the principal thing, not the action. Man, how he is reflected in the vision of the romanticist, interests him, but not what the man does. That is why also B. Shaw excels in the drawing of characters while the plot does not interest him much.

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\* Introduction to "Major Barbara," page 147.

The romanticist F. Schlegel knows that only through love and the consciousness of love the man becomes a Man. He knows that life takes its origin in love. Also B. Shaw says the same thing; but instead of love he, the strict puritan, calls it Life-Force. Tanner, when making love to Ann, says :

“ I love you. The Life-Force enchants me. I have the whole world in my arms when I clasp you.”

Again, has not this enemy of romanticism and love given us a picture of the love of a young poet to a mature woman (“ Candida ”) that stands, and will stand, unique in the whole literature?

The romanticists are the glorifiers of women. But also B. Shaw is a true romanticist in this respect. His *Candida*, *Cicely Waynflete*, and *Barbara*, are they not the highest glorifications, the highest tributes paid to women? The young poet, *Marchbanks*, speaks of *Candida* as of : “ A woman with a great soul craving for reality, truth, freedom.” And he asks her husband, the self-confident preacher : “ Do you think a woman’s soul can live on your talent for preaching? ”

But, perhaps, the highest praise women receive in “ *John Bull’s Other Island*,” when *Broadbent* says to the girl he makes love to :

“ I know I am not good enough for you, *Nora*. But no man is, you know, if the woman is a really nice woman.”\*

To the romanticists sleep is the world of charming phantoms. Men were more romantic in the past than at present, and reality was dream, and dream was reality to them. That is why men used to pay more attention to dreams in the past than we do to it now. And it was one of the beloved methods of the romanticists to introduce dreams in their works. Also B. Shaw introduces in “ *Man and Superman* ” a most romantic dream which he uses to express ideas which he could not very well discuss in the play itself.

In “ *Getting Married* ” B. Shaw also introduces a remarkable vision, and this vision it is that transforms the “ discussion ” into a lyrical poem. Indeed, B. Shaw is always conscious of romantic beauty. Take “ *Arms and the Man*.” How delightful is the opening of the play—the meeting of the

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\* Page 101.



romantic girl in her nightgown with the refugee soldier, travel stained and weary. Or the opening scene of "Cæsar and Cleopatra," in the moon night near the Sphinx. One feels with Cæsar when he says:—

"What a dream! What a magnificent dream! Only let me not wake, and I will conquer ten continents to pay for dreaming it out to the end."\*

There is again the relation between B. Shaw and the romanticists in their appreciation and making use of humour and satire as means to their ends. Some of the works of Byron are really great satires. Byron and Heine, Tieck and W. Schlegel, even Novalis became once a parodist.

In one of his latest works, "Press Cuttings," B. Shaw introduces a romantic lady who makes the following confession for the author: "What is life without romance?"† Indeed, B. Shaw was bound to confess the utility of romance. If everything existing in nature is only the deception of the Life-Force in order to fulfil its purpose, why not suppose that also romance tends to this end? And it is only one of the means through which nature manifests itself for the continuation of the race? All the tricks of love are natural because they are the means through which the Life-Force fulfils its purpose.

B. Shaw has always been protesting against the influence of *bad* romance on the public, while some of his works, like "Candida," "You Never Can Tell," are true hymns to romance, apotheosises to romantic beauty.

### THE MAN.

I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence, or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my nature.

—B. Shaw.

B. Shaw was born in Dublin, of Irish Protestant parents, on July 26th, 1856. The melancholic Irish landscapes, its lakes and moors, heaths and woods, many empty dwellings—

\* Page 104.

† Page 29.

ruins of a visionary past, with its soft but moist climate—influenced the young B. Shaw. The country, half ruined and depopulated by bad administration, awakens a sadness in her children which borders with hatred towards the whole human kind that allows such a state of affairs. This hatred which is so conspicuous in Dean Swift.

It is natural for nations, just as well as for individuals, that if reality is too sad to fly from it into a world of fancy, to go to the past or to the future for our hopes. Man creates then his own world of fiction where he lives, he becomes romantic. It is, to a certain extent, also the fault of the Irish Church, the Roman Catholic Church, with all the zeal of its numerous and arduous priests that are trying to bind the poor ignorant peasants to the church. There is no hope for the poor in this world, life is dull and melancholic here without any hopes of escape from its miseries, so we shall try to get for you the other. By these means the attention of the nation is led from the practical sphere of interests into a different direction: to that of dreamy romanticism. And instead of an active, powerful nation we have a nation of romanticists, of dreamers.

The young B. Shaw principally occupied himself with music, that art so beloved by the Irish, and considered the most important of arts by the romanticists. This musical faculty he has inherited of his mother, who achieved a certain distinction as an amateur singer and organiser of concerts and operas in Dublin. In later life she earned her own living and her son's as a trainer of choirs and teacher of singing in London.

B. Shaw was the only son, and besides him were two daughters, one named Agnes, died in 1876, the other, Miss Lucy Carr Shaw, became a professional singer, and lives now in retirement in Germany. She is the authoress of some books, her best known work being a series of letters on the education of a girl.

When a small boy his uncle, the Reverend William Carroll, taught him some Latin grammar. Afterwards he was sent to the Wesleyan Connexional School, now Wesley College, in Stephen's Green.

Although he remained there for several years yet he learned very little that we can say that he received no education, if

By education we mean the archaical system of teaching Greek and Latin to men who will never make any use of it, and nothing of the practical life. Of his schooldays he says: "I look back on as the most completely wasted and mischievous part of my life." He knew very little Latin, but he had acquired the beginning of that deep knowledge of literature, music, and painting which has been of such use for him in his after life.

He left school at fourteen, and from the age of fifteen to twenty he did ordinary office work at a land agency office. When twenty he left Dublin for London, where he continued to look for office work the first three years. In the preface to "The Traditional Knot" he speaks of this London life as being quite happy:—

"I could walk into Hampton Court Palace and the National Gallery (on free days) and enjoy Mantegna and Michael Angelo, whilst millionaires were yawning miserably over inept gluttonies; because I could suffer more by hearing a movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony taken at a wrong tempo than a duchess by losing a diamond necklace, I was indifferent to the repulsive fact that if I had fallen in love with a duchess I did not possess a morning suit in which I could reasonably have expected her to touch me with the furthest protended pair of tongs; and I did not see that to remedy this I should have been prepared to wade through seas of other people's blood."\*

In 1879 B. Shaw began a "Passion Play" in blank verse, but this youthful ambition was never completed. From 1879 to 1883 he produced the five novels of his "nonage." "Immaturity," 1879; "The Irrational Knot," 1880; "Love Among the Artists," 1881, interrupted by the small-pox attack; "Cashel Byron's Profession," 1882; and "An Unsocial Socialist," 1883. These novels indicate the author's power of observation, and they surely show some literary qualities. In the preface to "Cashel Byron's Profession" he speaks of them as of "five heavy brown-paper parcels which were always coming back to me from some publisher, and raising the very serious financial question of the sixpence to

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\* Page xviii.

be paid to Messrs. Carter, Paterson and Co., the carriers, for passing them on to the next publisher.”\*

Although the literary merits of these novels are not very great they are, at any rate, not inferior to those hundreds of novels published yearly in the United Kingdom. But it was not for their faults that no publisher would venture on them, as B. Shaw truly remarks: “I should not greatly blame them if I could feel sure that it was the book’s faults and not its qualities that repelled them.”

Towards the close of the period of novel-writing he joined the Socialist movement. The beginning of his Socialism was the hearing of Henry George, at the Memorial Hall, in 1882. Afterwards he read Karl Marx’s “Capital,” which has completed his conversion.

In 1879 he first appeared in public life by joining a debating society, called the Zeletical Society. His first attempt as a public speaker being a failure on account of his nervousness he resolved to make a speech in public every week for a year until he acquired the habit of a public speaker.

He was very active as a Socialist at Bath. He helped to found and keep going the Hampstead Historic Club, a private circle of students of Marx and Prudhom, which eventually became the British Economic Association. B. Shaw is also an active member of the Fabian Society, for which he edited its essays, some of these being of his own pen. He wrote: “The Fabian Society: Its Early History,” 1892; “The Impossibilities of Anarchism,” 1893; “Fabianism and the Empire,” 1900; “Socialism for Millionaires,” 1901; “Fabianism and the Fiscal Question,” 1904. In 1904, on the eve of the London County Council election, he issued “The Common Sense of Municipal Trading.” In this election he stood as a Progressive candidate for St. Pancras, but was defeated. From 1897 to 1903 he was a very active vestryman and borough councillor. He was a steady attendant and a man of business, most patient of detail and administrative drudgery.

His literary career did properly begin nine years after his arrival in London, when in 1885, through the influence of Mr. William Archer, he was appointed on the reviewing staff of

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\* Page v.



the "Pall Mall Gazette," under the late W. F. Stead. From 1886-87 B. Shaw was art critic in "The World," from 1888-90 musical critic in "The Star," and from 1890-94 again art critic in "The World," under Edmund Yates. Then came "The Saturday Review" dramatic criticism from January, 1895, to May, 1898, which gave him a unique place among dramatic critics. A selection of these, entitled "Dramatic Essays and Opinions," was issued in the spring of 1906, in two volumes, under the editorship of James Hunecker. B. Shaw also wrote two essays which must be reckoned among his more important works. The first is in form of a letter contributed to Benjamin R. Tucker's paper, "Liberty," in refutation of Max Nordau's "Degeneration." It was reprinted under the title, "The Sanity of Art," in 1911. The second is a fine essay "On Going to Church," which appeared in the first number of the "Savoy" in January, 1896.

His "Quintessence of Ibsenism," 1891, and "The Perfect Wagnerite," 1898, form good examples of that consistency of thought and aim which characterises his career. B. Shaw tries to explain "The Nibelungen Ring" in the light of the revolutionary ideas of 1848, of which Wagner was an enthusiastic supporter. It contains the supposition that the hero of "The Nibelungen Ring" is Siegfried Bacounin, who is to conquer the gods. But the revolutionary Siegfried is conquered by the Wotan-Loge. And not Siegfried-Bacounin came, but Bismark. While "The Quintessence of Ibsenism" could with just as much right be called "The Quintessence of Shavianism." He represents Ibsen as a fighter against ideals and idealists.

We have seen B. Shaw till now occupied in all branches of the art life in London: picture galleries, concerts, theatres, not speaking of his economical and political studies, became his school of life. What is surprising with B. Shaw is that all these years he was satisfied with explaining other people's productions, and not producing himself art works. Luckily these years of journalism did not spoil B. Shaw as many another man. He considers this period as his apprenticeship which made him master of his own style. All these years the critic, G.B.S., was really preparing the way for the dramatist B. Shaw. It is quite easy to see how hard he had to work. Because it was at a time that it seemed there was no room for

thoughtful work. He had to be a pioneer for Ibsen in drama, and Wagner in music, and thus slowly prepare the way for his own works.

His first play, "The Widowers' Houses," he began in collaboration with Mr. W. Archer in 1885. This collaboration proved a failure, and the first two acts which B. Shaw has written were put aside. In 1892, when the Independent Theatre was started, he added to the first two acts written previously a third one, thus completing his first play, and it was launched at the Royalty Theatre. The first play made quite a sensation, and it was discussed for a fortnight practically by the whole press. Other plays followed. In 1898 they were issued in two volumes, under the title, "Plays Pleasant and Unpleasant." The first volume contained the "Unpleasant Plays," namely: "Widowers' Houses: A Play"; "The Philanderer: A Topical Comedy"; and "Mrs. Warren's Profession: A Play." The "Pleasant Plays," in volume II., contained four plays: "Arms and the Man: A Comedy"; "Candida: A Mystery"; "The Man of Destiny: A Trifle"; and "You Never Can Tell: A Comedy."

In 1901 "Three Plays for Puritans" was published. This volume containing: "The Devil's Disciple," "Cæsar and Cleopatra," and "Captain Brassbound's Conversion." In 1903 "Man and Superman" was published, but its public performance did not take place before the year 1905. In the same year "John Bull's Other Island," written originally for the Irish National Theatre, was produced at the Royal Court Theatre, also "How He Lied to Her Husband," and "Major Barbara." These plays appeared in 1907 in a volume with prefaces, which are amongst the best examples of his art. His other plays that appeared since then are: "The Doctor's Dilemma," 1906; "Getting Married," 1908; "The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet," 1909. All the three were published in one volume in 1911. "Press Cuttings," produced at the Royal Court Theatre in 1909, was also published in 1911. "Misalliance" produced, but not yet published. All the plays of B. Shaw have been performed, and met with great success, not only in England, but also in America and in many countries on the Continent.

B. Shaw leads an extraordinary active life. He has been active nearly in all branches of journalistic work. Since his

early youth he is also active as a lecturer and reformer of society. As a lecturer and speaker of public meetings his attitude towards his audience is that of a man who is informing them of things they ought to know, and who is much irritated at their being ignorant of the things he is obliged to tell them. His religious fervour, humour, wit, and oratorical skill make him as popular an orator as a dramatist. Although he tells his audience the truth, a very disagreeable thing to hear, yet there is a charm in the utterings of this great teacher of a higher morality that reconciles him to everybody.

He is a strict vegetarian. Even when he was very ill, and told by the doctors that he will die if he does not eat meat, he refused to comply with the wishes of his family. He wrote at that time in "The Daily Chronicle" :—

"My situation is a solemn one. Life is offered to me on condition of eating beefsteaks. My weeping family crowd about me with Bovril and Brand's Essence. But death is better than cannibalism. My will contains directions for my funeral, which will be followed not by mourning coaches, but by herds of oxen, sheep, swine, flocks of poultry, and a small travelling aquarium of live fish, all wearing white scarves in honour of the man who perished rather than eat his fellow-creatures. It will be, with the exception of the Noah's Ark, the most remarkable thing of the kind seen."

In 1898 he married Miss Charlotte Frances Payne-Townshend, who is a kindred spirit to him. She is the translator of some plays of Brieux, which appeared in England, with a preface of B. Shaw.

B. Shaw is a born debater, whether in speech or in writing. The public debates at Battersea, in which he took part, used to provide one of the most intellectual entertainments in London.

Although he began to write very early many years have passed before he arrived to evident success, and he is not fully recognised till the present day. And surely of all great men B. Shaw is one who mostly deserves recognition. But the only recognition that would satisfy him is the doing away with all those evils against which he fights. Only such a success:

would satisfy the English sage. So let us hope that he will remain long enough amongst us to see the changes realised for which he worked all his life through.

### THE DRAMATIST.

Never give the people anything they want,  
give them something they ought to  
want and don't.—*B. Shaw.*

It has almost become a truism to thoughtful men that theatre, next to school, is the most important institution for development of character. But the fact of the importance of schools is now recognised in all civilised countries, and we have everywhere public instruction, while the other branch which is so materially essential to human progress is practically neglected, and is in all countries left in the hands of private enterprise. The consequence of it is that the modern theatre is too much influenced by the public, and every theatre manager tries to make of it not a place for instruction, but to get out of it as much money as possible by pleasing the public. This trying to please the public has destroyed the independence of the theatre.

This anomaly is especially of bad consequences in England where there are no State supported theatres—a worse condition than in Russia—and where most of the dramatists are hirelings of certain stage managers, and write for a certain public. It is evident that we cannot speak of the free creating power of such playwrights that are bound to please a certain audience.

But life does not remain stationary. Indeed, we live in a time of changes which are of vital importance. Character, property, the relation of the sexes, everything underwent a revaluation in the world of thought and of private life. These changes in our civilisation influenced certainly also the theatre-going public. But the playwrights and theatre managers did not notice this change and remained with their old notions on duty, love, heroism, conventionalism, and other superstitions. And the theatre has lost its hold of the public in consequence of it. The situation was most critical, and it was felt everywhere that a change also in the theatre is of vital importance. Into these suffocating circumstances B. Shaw, to whom the theatre is “a factory of thought, a prompter of conscience,



an elucidator of social conduct, an armoury against despair and dulness, and a temple of the Ascent of Man." has brought new life. His plays are a protest against the melodramatic theatre and against the public that delights in such plays, which goes to the theatre not for instruction but for sensualism.

We find in B. Shaw's works nearly all questions of modern life discussed and treated, everything that is of interest to humanity : social questions and marriage, war and vivisection, vegetarianism and alcohol, religion and morality, Ireland and Egypt, the colonial question and party politics, the Salvation Army and Socialism, anarchism and capitalism, modern education and classical languages, music and art, Nietzsche and Wagner. All questions find in him their exponent. Although he is serious yet he is never dull, because he has succeeded to combine things intellectual and amusing. B. Shaw has proved with his drama that brains are possible also in the theatre, and that an intellectual drama is also possible in England. The curse of the English drama was for many years its imitation of French models, and it was B. Shaw that has restored to the English drama its self-respect.

B. Shaw is often wrongly called a farceur. There is a great difference between farce whose only aim is to amuse the public and which is consequently only humorous, and the moral comedy which is mostly satirical. The latter represents on the stage the morals of the age with the intention to ridicule them. That is why a satirist is usually a fighter who is hated by those against whom he fights, whose morals he ridicules. Also farce or intrigue comedy might be the production of genius, but it is only the moral comedy that can be called ethical work, because it fights against immorality, vulgarism, unnaturalness, prejudices, ugliness, and is on that account of great value for humanity. Another thing that differentiates true comedy from farce and from the various forms of pseudo-comedy is the extreme seriousness. The end of farce is sheer laughter, and the end of the so-called comedy of intrigue is plot interest. But true comedy is characteristic for its strenuous outlook upon life. Laughter is to it only the means through which it aims at something higher. Herein lies its advantage over tragedy : it is more ethical. That is why B. Shaw has chosen this kind of comedy, it suits him most, it is his genre.

But there are other reasons, besides ethical, why B. Shaw prefers comedy to tragedy. It is a matter of point of view whether we see things in the humorous or in the tragical light, because there are the humorous and tragical elements in everything. And B. Shaw will probably never write a true tragedy. He is too much of an intellectual man to be absorbed with a great passion necessary to write a tragedy. He is not without passion, but far too much socialist to be totally absorbed with the life and sufferings of the individual, and consider it the principal thing.

But B. Shaw is not an ordinary humorist. In his works there is something more substantial than mere humour. There were many humorists in England, France, Germany, and other countries, but few can boast of such a wide influence, and whose influence is sure to increase with time as B. Shaw, because his dramas are a school of life. He opens the eyes of his audience to certain questions which they would probably never have seen without his help. That is why he makes his heroes discuss things at full length. He tears the cover off from all sociable lies and conventions. So naked was society never yet shown on the stage or in literature.

The chief point in the drama of B. Shaw is not the conflict of events, but that of character. In the "Preface to the Pleasant Plays"\* he enunciated the law of conflict. "Every drama must be the artistic presentation of a conflict. The end may be reconciliation; or as in life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable: no conflict, no drama." But it is the conflict of characters that is essential to drama, and it is only in the drawing of characters that the poetic ability of a dramatist comes to light. The invention of plots, dramatic and stage technic are things easily acquired or learned. Never will an author who lacks the artistic ability to draw characters produce a great work. It is a thing one cannot learn.

The dramas of B. Shaw contain no plot worth speaking of. The catastrophes they set forth are of an intellectual sort. That is why his plays are only for an intellectual audience. Because for the ignorant there is one interest in plays and in novels—

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\* Page vii.

the plot interest. It is the plot that they are searching for in the books they read, or the theatres they visit. The ethical, symbolical, and artistic parts of a work of art are things they do not see nor understand. This plot interest is characteristic for the modern ignorant men which care less how things are described but what is described, which search not for the deep thought that underlies the work, but for the outward action.

B. Shaw does not only tell us what has happened to his heroes, but he gives us a full and thorough account of their moral, political, and ideal state of mind. His character studies are masterpieces. This mastery of human character has seldom been surpassed. His heroes are acting well or badly but on principle. You see the reasons for all their actions and doings, they are natural instead of being conventional as in the plays of other dramatists.

His plays are the most interesting and amusing that have been presented on our stage, and for their artistic descriptions they are really novels which you enjoy as much by reading as by seeing them on the stage. He is always objective, and does not, like other dramatists, represent the man with whom he does not agree as a fool, but makes it clear to us that everyone is acting on principle, from his own point of view. That is why his plays are so lifelike, and they hold the public by the sheer interest of its representation of life instead of the plot interest.

Although more thinker than dreamer, more critic than poet, more social reformer than dramatist, yet he is richly endowed with imagination, and he has a great understanding for dramatic emotion. Never before were offered such stage directions, so elaborately worked out, giving such distinct sketches of the characters and circumstances. That is what makes the reading of B. Shaw's plays a pleasant and agreeable task. His exquisite verbal fireworks, his natural and brilliant dialogue, his acute characterisations and skilful exposition of character by means of dramatic action intermingle with flashes of wit, psychological observations, generous and noble ideas. He is always original, the next line bringing forward something one did not expect. Yet in spite of his originality he is always natural and realistic. There are moments that surprise with their truth of life, there is emotion that is characteristic to the best kind of drama.

# THE PLAYS.

## WIDOWERS' HOUSES.

B. Shaw's first play in point of writing, performance, and being published, is "Widowers' Houses," produced at the Royalty by Mr. Grein in 1892. The origin of this play dated back as far as 1885, and sprang from a collaboration with Mr. Archer. This collaboration, naturally enough, proved a failure. In the preface to the "Unpleasant Plays" B. Shaw tells us in his usual humorous style of it:—

"Mr. Archer has himself described how I proved the most impossible of collaborators. Laying violent hands on his thoroughly planned scheme for a sympathetically romantic 'well made play' of the type then in vogue, I perversely distorted it into a grotesquely realistic exposure of slum landlordism, municipal jobbery, and the pecuniary and matrimonial ties between them and the pleasant people of 'independent' incomes who imagine that such sordid matters do not touch their own lives."\*

The first two acts were taken up by B. Shaw in 1892; after having lain in the drawer for seven years a third act was added, and the play produced at the Royalty.

"Widowers' Houses" made an instant stir. The public, brought up on melodramas, was somewhat startled at the new ideas in which they saw a danger to their morals, conventions, and prejudices. Especially furious over it were the Sartoriuses who have recognised the infamy of a state in which they play such a miserable role. "The first performances," says its author, "was sufficiently exciting: the Socialists and Independents applauded me furiously on principle; the ordinary playgoing first nighter hooted me frantically on the same ground. The newspapers discussed the play for a fortnight not only in the ordinary theatrical notices and criticisms, but in leading articles and letters."†

We must not wonder at the storm raised round this play. The question or questions discussed in it are of such great im-

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\* Page 46.



portance, and concern so many people, that the interest it raised was quite natural. The most important question discussed in it is of men living on money derived from sources they cannot approve of. The houses of Mr. Sartorius are the slum houses which exist in every big town. In these houses the poor get "cheap" dwellings where they lead dog's life. These houses bring the owner large incomes. Because he is hard enough to press these sums out of the poor even if their children are starving and the girls are thrown on the streets to earn the rent.

This play contains social ideals worked out dramatically, and B. Shaw proves already in this his first dramatic work a wide understanding of social questions and an exceedingly acute power of observation. "Widowers' Houses" does not only indicate that a housing reform is necessary, but that a change is badly wanted in all branches of our social life.

The most dramatic moment in the play is when Sartorius informs the young Trench that he is as bad as himself, that also his income is derived from no better sources, that also he lives on the starvation, crime, misery, and shame of the poor. But B. Shaw does not blame Sartorius or Trench for it, but the whole society which has arranged matters so that the individual can prosper only by plundering the poor. In the following words B. Shaw clearly states whom he considers responsible that matters stand like this:—

*Trench*: Do you mean to say that I am as bad as you are?

*Sartorius*: If when you say you are just as bad as I am, you mean that you are just as powerless to alter the state of society, then you are unfortunately quite right.\*

Now, when Trench is informed of the true source of his income, and seeing that if he would sell the mortgages on Sartorius' houses he would instead of his £700 annual income get only £250 he decides to stand in and marry Blanche.

In this play the problem works out as it would have done in real life. The love affair between Dr. Trench and Blanche Sartorius is free of all illusions. The whole play makes a painful impression. The inability of the individual to live according to his conscience discourages. Especially the end

\* Page xi.

† "Unpleasant Plays," page xii.

of the play is revolting. We see the brutal Blanche led in to supper by the good-for-nothing, foolish, narrow-minded snob Cokane, and the successful scoundrel Lickcheese leading the hard, cruel Sartorius and the young fool Trench. What a noble society, one is apt to call out! What a pleasant sight! And the worst of it is that one feels that it is true life.

This play, as the other two plays of which I shall speak presently, is destined to displease the majority of readers, as the sight of human misery is always unpleasant. That is why B. Shaw, with his usual wisdom, has called the volume containing his first three plays "Unpleasant Plays."

### *THE PHILANDERER.*

After the storm raised by the production of his first play B. Shaw could not in the nature of things remain silent. He took up arms and fought his battle out further. This time he turned his arms against the Ibsenists of England, these new men and women that stick to old conventions. In "The Philanderer" the wrangle between the young Ibsenists and the old generation that is not yet up to the advanced ideas of Ibsen is charmingly described. Although Ibsen's ideas have already lost the sense of modernity, and some of his types have been superseded by others, higher, and more to the standard of time, yet this play well repays study.

"The Philanderer" is a fine satire full of irony. The picture of Dr. Paramore who believes in a new disease discovered by him, and is delighted to find men suffering from it, and cast down into despair when he finds that the Paramore-disease does not exist is superb. This scientific fool is quite cast down at the idea that his patient will get cured in an unscientific way, and will not die in the scientific. This satire upon the medical profession is in parts as good as Molière's satires on the medical profession.

The sacrifice of man to principles is what is foolish with these scientists. Their attitude is as if the disease was more important to them than the patient. Just as some lawyers think that men exist for the law and not the contrary.

Also art has its scientists, those foolish representatives that do not understand human emotion, don't see the change of

characters brought about by the changes in life. A representative of this caste we have in the person of the critic Cuthbertson. He has been brought up on the romantic, conventional plays, and he has therefore no sense for reality, no taste for the serious drama. On the stage he wants to see chivalry, no matter how men behave in real life. Simple, narrow-minded, but kind-hearted and good-natured, this critic has been drawn from life. The critic's daughter, Grace Tranfield, represents the advanced people in this play. Serious, intelligent, strong-minded, she carries in herself already the seeds of B. Shaw's future good women characters. The other women characters of this play are Julia Craven, the emotional, weak, womanly woman, and her clever, saucy younger sister Sylvia. Their father, the old Colonel Craven, who with the critic Cuthbertson represent the old generation, awakens a great deal of human sympathy and interest.

But of special interest is the hero of the play, the philanderer Charteris. This clever, but selfish man, attracts the interest of women. He is the Ibsen philosopher, and a prominent member of the Club. He has brains, but no feeling, while Julia Craven, who loves him, has feeling and no brains. In all the four acts he tries to get rid of her, and at last succeeds in throwing the burden on the shoulders of the poor Dr. Paramore.

The debate between the doctor and the Colonel about the humanity of their two trades is admirable. The play is in parts very dramatic. There is deep tragedy in the words of Grace, who had to abandon the man she loves to Julia, who is going to marry the man she does not love :

*Grace* : This is what they call a happy ending, these men.

The play contains also many fine strokes of deep and brilliant comedy, and a clever criticism of the present society by Charteris.

### MRS. WARREN'S PROFESSION.

"Mrs. Warren's Profession" is one of the most bitter satires that was ever written against modern society, and it can only be compared to "Gulliver's Travels" and his great

satire against humanity. Never before or afterwards has B. Shaw risen to such heights of purely dramatic emotions. The author's ideas are expressed in the most dramatic way and readily remain in mind. In this play B. Shaw treats again social horrors. We see the individual quite dependent on his surroundings, on society. Because modern society is so organised that man must choose whether to be a plunderer or plundered. It gives no opportunity to a man who likes to live in peace with his conscience, with his better self.

Kitty Warren's profession is that of harlotry. On the earnings of her dirty trade she educates her daughter Vivien. But by giving her an education she is building up the barrier between herself and her daughter. So we see that the conflict between mother and daughter is inevitable. When Vivien is informed of the origin of her comfort and refinement she is so shocked that she begins to hate her own mother. But is it Mrs. Warren's fault that she had to take up this infamous trade? The majority of men try to escape infamy as long as they can find honest means to earn their subsistence. It is only the total impossibility to earn a decent living by a honourable profession that they must fly to the extremity of evil. So long as we shall leave to women the only alternative whether to work themselves to death in white lead or similar factories for nine shillings a week, or take to the ignoble profession of the prostitute that pays well, must we wonder that prostitution will exist? And who is to be blamed for it?

Also, Kitty Warren had to choose between noble starvation or ignoble prosperity, and she has chosen the latter. Her daughter, like B. Shaw himself, with whom Mr. Archer has identified Vivien, cannot blame her for a thing to which she was forced. But she cannot help it not to detest her for her profession in spite of herself. It is an æsthetical aversion, as any honest man feels towards a scoundrel.

But B. Shaw detests all kinds of prostitution, because it is moral suicide. It robs the woman of her destination to bear life, degrades her physically and morally, and spoils her soul, as it demoralises all those that concern themselves with it. And here comes he and tells us that even marriage in present society is no better than prostitution. This assertion is by no means new. Max Nordau and many others have said the same thing before him. But B. Shaw, with his usual



vigour, instead of writing a whole book against marriage, defined it in one sentence which stands as an accusation against modern marriage :

*Mrs. Warren* : The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her.\*

The same idea is stated in the same act, even with more precision :

*Mrs. Warren* : What is any respectable girl brought up to do but to catch some rich man's fancy and get the benefit of his money by marrying him?—as if a marriage ceremony could make any difference in the right or wrong of the thing.†

To make a business of marriage and to prostitute is one and the same thing, because both destroy the self-respect of those partaking in it. Now we come to the question : if it is immoral to trade with the body of woman because it makes her lose her self-respect, it kills in her the highest stimulation, the thing that distinguishes man from beast, and deprives her of the possibility to bear life ; why should we, in the name of common sense, distinguish between trading with the beauty of women from trading with the strength of men so long as the result in both cases is the same ? So he comes to the conclusion that not only can any modern mother who sells her daughter to the man that pays most, *i.e.*, accepts the richest proposition of marriage and Sir G. Crofts' brother, whose working girls are forced to prostitution in order to earn for their subsistence, be compared to Mrs. Warren, but any large employer of labour or any man doing for money things which are against his conscience must not grind his teeth at the contemptible profession, because his own is no better.

As we have seen, B. Shaw has treated in this play a subject that has often been handled. Yet B. Shaw succeeded in showing it from a particular point of view and in a quite new light. If we are just as much disgusted with the "profession" after having read the play, yet there is no more this attitude of disgust to the poor woman who was forced by society to it as before. There is no more room for self exultation and

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\* Page 197.

† Page 195.

thinking ourselves above her because we do not do the same thing. It makes one rather feel ashamed of himself for supporting this order of things and think himself as much in the profession as Kitty Warren and Sir George Crofts.

There is surely great danger when harlotry becomes so simple that men speak of it only as a business paying so much interest on capital as Sir G. Crofts does. But is there a great moral difference between the 35 per cent. interest on the capital invested in Mrs. Warren's ill houses, to the 22 per cent. interest got out by his brother from his factories, or the 7 per cent. by Trench from his houses? There is practically one step from the position of Trench to that of Sir George Crofts.

The description of the characters is as perfect as could be. Mrs. Warren, this "blackguard of a woman," vulgar with the crude romanticism of a prostitute, sentimental, yet practical, and business-like. Her partner, the brutish Crofts, and her friend Praed, the Reverend Samuel Gardner and his "good-for-nothing" son are all carefully designed. Especially the girl Vivien. This well-educated, clever, moral, and practical girl is the first woman type, his first sketch which was afterwards developed in the brilliant pictures of Candida, Cicely Waynflete, and Barbara. She feels an attachment towards Franck Gardner, whose father, the foolish clergyman, was one time intimate with Mrs. Warren. When Vivien refuses Sir J. Crofts' proposition he tells her that Franck is perhaps her own brother. Although this is probably untruth, yet the least possibility of its being true makes for a girl like Vivien any further intercourse with him unbearable, and she parts with her mother and the whole society to spend her life on hard office work.

The dialogue is drastic, sweeping, and of extraordinary strength. B. Shaw lets Mrs. Warren state her case with impartiality and thoroughness characteristic to a true artist. And she is sure to raise our compassion even in spite of ourselves.

The play met with absurd criticism and was prohibited by the Censor of Plays. The "sensitive" American critics especially received it with an hysterical outcry of outraged respectability. Whether "it was because they thought themselves personally assaulted, or it was in their duty as faithful servants of the brothers Crofts which exist even in the moral

America ” will, perhaps, remain a problem. Still the absurdity of such criticism is quite evident. Things do not become immoral when we speak of them and put them to the pillory, but when they exist in life. Even the moral American critics could not deny that these things exist, because even the greatest fools amongst their readers would not have believed it. And surely if such things exist we must speak of them, tell men to do away with them. That is what B. Shaw has done. He has shown us the immorality not only of prostitution, but of society that makes it possible and essential. He, as an economist and social reformer, has seen that in order to do away with it we must cut out the root of the evil, *i.e.*, organise society in such a manner that people should have a free choice between honest, well paid work and prostitution. Because only when prostitution as a profession will no longer be the only means that can secure a livelihood, it will become unnecessary and then impossible.

### ARMS AND THE MAN.

In his “ Unpleasant Plays ” B. Shaw exhibits by means of clever dialogue certain evils of the modern society and thus appeals to human sense and emotion. These evils are mostly the result of social misery and inequality. But not only social problems are of importance. There are many others, like conventionality, melodramatic notions of hero, valour, and love which must be solved and done away with. To the destruction of these “ ideals ” his second volume called “ Pleasant Plays ” is destined.

The first in this series, “ Arms and the Man,” is one of the most successful plays on the stage of B. Shaw’s earlier productions. The secret of its success lies not in the fact that it is better than his other works, but in the matter of the play. Although the action takes place in Bulgaria, yet it is not special Bulgarian, but of the world in general, and there is a strong satire already in the idea of the play.

It begins in an atmosphere of romanticism. Moonlight, a lovely heroine on the balcony, firing in the street, valour shown on the battlefield in the fight for his country by the lover of the heroine. In this romantic scene occurs the dramatic

entrance of the little, sturdy, professional Swiss soldier Bluntshli, who is in the immediate danger of being shot down. He is the incarnation of matter-of-fact, veiled under a slight mask of cynicism, yet one of the most romantic figures conceivable. Brought into this society of half barbarous romanticists he cures the heroine Raina of her crude romanticism about war, bravery, dissipates her illusions on heroism, and before the first act is over she is in love with him.

One of the chief objections to war is that it is idealised, made romance of. That is where the danger for humanity lies : we direct our ideas and will in the wrong way. But every clever commander very well knows that it is quite necessary in the army to idealise war and make romance of "valour" shown on the battlefield. In short, crude romanticism is essential for the military caste. Because quite a rational and clever army would not fight for the interests of the Crofts, Undershafes, and Lazaruses. That is why war and the actions on the battlefield must be glorified, why crime must be idealised by the military caste.

In this play B. Shaw introduces what he considers a model hero. It is the practical man with a sense of reality, the matter-of-fact Swiss officer Bluntshli and not Major Šergius Saranoff, who is only a buffoon, a fool who wraps himself in an heroic mantle.

The art of war has so materially changed in our days that the hero of the romantic period may deserve to be court-martialled if he acts in the same way at present. Bluntshli is the true hero, because he is a man with a sense for reality, up to date. He knows that his life is of importance, and he must preserve it as long as possible. He states it in an admirable way at the beginning of his conversation with Raina :

*Raina* : Some soldiers, I know, are afraid of death.

*Bluntshli* : All of them, dear lady, all of them, believe me. It is our duty to live as long as we can.\*

There is reasonableness and deep thought in all that, and his paradoxes are truisms essential to the modern art of war. But Bluntshli does not only know that he must preserve his life as long as possible, when *necessary* he can also die, and die fighting as is becoming to a man. It is beautifully described

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\* Page 9.



in the first act when he draws his sabre preparing *himself* to sell his life as dear as possible when it *will be essential*. But only when it will be essential. Because he considers it his duty to live as long as he can help to avoid death, and kill as many of the enemies as possible. A clear understanding and a mastery of reality, that is what is essential to the modern hero.

This play does not only contain a satire of the common notions on heroism, but B. Shaw also shows great understanding of military matters. Everyone who is acquainted with military affairs knows that the first row of a cavalry charge are usually the worst riders, who simply cannot manage their horses and are carried away by them into immediate danger. These “heroes” do not only put their own lives in danger, but are acting by this charge often in the most precarious way to the whole party, because they weaken by their charge the whole wing. It is also true that the result of the campaign depends more on the disposition of the army than on personal bravery of the soldiers or officers. The supply of provisions to a great army is at least of equal importance to the result of the war as the supply of arms. B. Shaw states it when he makes his hero Bluntshli say that he is carrying chocolate in his pockets instead of cartridges. In the second act B. Shaw states it more expressly :

*Sergius* : We want you here badly. We have to send on three cavalry regiments to Philippopolis; and we don't in the least know how to do it.

*Bluntshli* : Philippopolis? The forage is the trouble, I suppose.\*

The dialogue is witty and amusing and there is a strong romantic interest in the play. While the end of it, where the Major Saranoff marries a chambermaid, is a little surprising, yet is there much reasonableness and common sense in the whole.

CANDIDA.

After "Arms and the Man" followed what is a masterpiece of human drama and the prettiest love poem in all works of B. Shaw. I consider "Candida" to be amongst the works of B. Shaw what "Romeo and Juliet" is amongst those of Shakespeare. It is full of poetic beauties, deep psychological thoughts, and it is specially human of that sort that is not restricted by time and place. Also the study of characters is extraordinary true and complete in their perfect understanding. The Reverend James Morell, a Christian Socialist in war with many evils and lies of our social life, is an inimitably well drawn character. In fact, a living Morell would always say or think exactly as B. Shaw makes him do it. Of special interest is the poet Eugen Marchbanks. Young, shy, full of dreams, yet with that curious, keen, poetic insight into the hearts of men and women characteristic to genius. Although his range of view is far above that of the clever, self-confident clergyman, yet he is not a man to go on well in an everyday world, and quite helpless in practical affairs.

Candida, Morell's wife, is a womanly woman. Utterly unselfish, warm-hearted, sensible, practical, with the only desire to bring peace and happiness to her surroundings. She knows also the practical side of life, but she does not live with her brains only, but with her heart too.

We see in "Candida" the conflict of two worlds: the world of dreams, represented by the poet Marchbanks, and the active, practical one, represented by James Morell. It is a fight between a genius and a gifted man for the woman both of them love. Seldom in the whole range of literature was the love of a fantastic youth to an aged woman described with such poetic charm and tragical contents as in this play. The knot is complicated, and we are near a tragical end. Only the clear sight of the woman, who sees with her eye of reason the way which she must act and choose, intervenes in the right moment and saves the situation. She has also to fight a hard struggle between her instincts and reason, duty and love. She is to choose between the two men. And she chooses the weaker who needs most her help. Here B. Shaw is quite startling in the revelation of a truth of whose existence many have probably not been aware. She chooses her husband, the seeming

strong matter of fact man, as he is the weaker of the two, while the weak unpractical poet Marchbanks is the stronger man.

It is clear that B. Shaw is with the Marchbanks, yet he is not without sympathy for the Moreells, and he does not leave us in doubt why this ideal woman remains with him.

Also the less essential characters are woven with great skill and artistic talent. Miss Garnet, whose love for the Rev. J. Morell we feel, although she never speaks of it, and Mr. Burgess, the "man of sixty, made coarse by the selfishness of petty commerce," the philistine to whom idealism is the synonym of madness are as perfect figures as any amongst B. Shaw's characters.

Of great interest is the question raised in this play on the attitude of the normal wife to the normal husband. If we compare it with Ibsen's "Nora" we see the great difference between the two. We have here also a woman not understood by her husband, and craving for a better understanding between them. Certainly the clever Candida is as far above the doll Nora as the socialist Morell is above the philistine Helmer. Like Ibsen's "Woman from the Sea," Candida knows that she must not run away from the bounds of married life as she can do so whenever she pleases, because she is really free.

In "Candida," as in most of B. Shaw's plays, there is a mixture of the tragical and satirical elements. There are deep thoughts, discussions on sociological questions, along with wit and satire, and he goes to the root of many questions. It involves a great deal of human understanding, and a thorough knowledge of character, a full and quiet mastery of emotion and profound psychological secrecy. The dialogue is strong and witty, often poignant and truly poetic, never unnatural. Especially the language of Marchbanks is of surpassing poetic beauty.

## THE MAN OF DESTINY.

The volume of "Pleasant Plays" contains also a study of Napoleon, entitled "The Man of Destiny," a trifle. In this play B. Shaw proves a remarkable understanding of the man that played such a conspicuous part in the European affairs at the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. It is B. Shaw's first attempt to give us an historical person, and it is a foreshadowing of later studies.

The description of "the imaginative without illusion, and creative without religion, loyalty, patriotism, or any of the common ideals," Napoleon is a very interesting study of the man. As far as latest biographies and studies of the subject confirm us it is nearly a true picture of him.

With a poignancy characteristic to B. Shaw he calls Napoleon the man of destiny. It is most remarkable because of all men it is Napoleon who defied destiny. Although superstitious, he had a will strong enough to achieve things in spite of destiny, to dictate destiny his own will.

A lady wants to steal some of Napoleon's despatches which contain proofs of the infidelity of his wife Josephine with his friend Barras. She is cheating Napoleon's foolish lieutenant out of them, but is outwitted, and has to give them back to Napoleon. The word duel between Napoleon and the lady is cleverly described, and is a real treat to the reader.

There is also a clever speech of Napoleon on the English, a speech which he certainly could not have delivered. And for the simple reason, because Napoleon never knew nor understood the English so well. But it is decidedly an expression of what B. Shaw thinks of them.

## · YOU NEVER CAN TELL.

"You Never Can Tell" represents B. Shaw in his most brilliant and diverting mood. It is a most wonderful display of characters of extremely sparkling and incessant variety. The twins insatiable in their curiosity, with a keen sense of life, and insolent with the joy of youth, are splendid. Mr. Crampton, old-fashioned, vulgar, of tyrannical disposition, yet of deep gentleness and longing for love. His wife, cool, clever, theoretic, with a strong will, is the typical English



woman that lives with her brain and not with her heart. The dentist Valentine, "the captured Duellist of Sex," and the one that conquers him, Gloria, are careful and well drawn personalities. While the true hero of the play, the waiter of the Marine Hotel, William, is a real masterpiece. He is benevolent, clever, and practical, and one of the most delightful amongst B. Shaw's creations.

The problem of the play is not of very great interest. In truth, there is not in it the development of a single essential interest, but there are many minor ones.

The first act is taking place in the room of a dentist. Dr. Valentine, a young doctor, accepts his first patient, a young lady, Dolly Clandon. She soon informs him that she, her mother, her sister Gloria, and brother Philip, came over from Spain in search of their father. Soon the whole family gathers in the room of the dentist. Mr. Valentine's landlord, Mr. McNaughton, also comes and has a tooth taken out.

In the second act they all meet at dinner in the Marine Hotel: the family, Clandon, Valentine, a solicitor, and McNaughton, or, as he calls himself now, Crampton, who is the missing father. Till now the development of the play is quite dramatic.

In the other two acts nothing particular happens. There is a meeting of the family with their solicitor and a K.C., and a ball. But what is drawn with great artistic skill is the wooing of Valentine for Gloria, a scene which is one of the most remarkable, although the love story between them is as cold as could be, and free of all illusions.

The play is entirely realistic in execution if romantic in conception. B. Shaw's criticism of life is as obvious as can be, and it abounds in beauties characteristic of a great work of art.

### · THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE.

In January, 1901, appeared in one volume three plays written previously, and entitled, "Three Plays for Puritans."

We have discussed till now his "Pleasant and Unpleasant Plays," and have seen that all of them could also be called plays for puritans. Yet there is something in this volume that specially justifies its name "for puritans." Especially the first play of this volume which has great merits. It does not

treat *one* certain philosophical or ethical question, but much serious and important matter is discussed in it.

It has been a favourite thing with the greatest poets of all times to describe and defend diabolical natures. And with a good reason. Because these are usually great men, real fighters for humanity. Indeed, all our reformers began as revolutionaries, negators of the existing order, and they have been accused as the devil's disciples, Antichrist, or Lucifer himself incarnated in them. Luther, Calvin, Tolstoy, and many other great reformers can serve as examples. These great "sinners," revolutionaries that fought against mean and obsolete institutions and morals, are the special favourites with our poets. Prometheus, Wallenstein, Cain are their beloved heroes. It is not only sympathy with those great men that suffered more than their due that attracts our poets, but the poet feels that he has something in common with them, that he is related with them. Also he is revolutionising and fighting against evils, clearing away obstacles from humanity's way to progress. Also B. Shaw was attracted by these devil's disciples, and has more than once defended the morality of revolt. In his "Definition of Immorality" he says: "An immoral act or doctrine is not necessarily a sinful one; on the contrary, every advance in thought and conduct is by definition immoral until it has converted the majority."\*

Also Dick Dudgeon is a true devil's disciple in this respect. He is not what he is supposed to be by those that surround him. He is considered an outcast, the shame, the infamy of his family, the worst amongst the bad. But when the day of trial comes his real self, the true greatness of his character is unveiled before us.

The play is very well constructed. Especially the first act, the reading of the will is a real masterpiece. B. Shaw shows in it a stagecraft not unworthy of the greatest dramatist. The description of the conventional mourning, and the elaborate picture of the Dudgeon family, is really magnificent. But all this has nothing to do with the further development of the play, as the first act serves only to introduce the three principal actors. That is why the second act is, perhaps, a little disappointing from the point of view of dramatic stagecraft, be-

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\* "Blanco Posnet," page 319.

cause the action does not develop in accordance with the first act, but the play begins now again.

The second act takes place at the parson's. It is the time of the revolt of the British Colonies in America against their mother country. British soldiers are about. They come for the parson who has been called away to a pastoral visit. Now is the time for the "devil's disciple" to show the greatness characteristic to human nature. And he shows a willingness to sacrifice himself for another man, he becomes a hero. He assumes the name of the clergyman, and tells the latter's wife to save her husband. He did all this not on account of his love towards the pastor's wife, Judith, but because he became conscious of his duty towards his fellow man, and he is willing to sacrifice himself as many other great reformers, so-called devil's disciples, did. The soldiers take Richard Dudgeon to be the parson and arrest him. In that time arrest means a mere preliminary to death. He is to be executed in order to frighten the whole neighbourhood into submission.

The third act is divided into three scenes. In the first Judith Anderson confesses to Richard that his heroism aroused her love. In this scene the true puritanical nature of Richard comes to light.

In the second scene Richard is tried by the court-martial and sentenced to death. The court-martial scene is one of the best in the play, a great deal of humour, wit, brilliancy, and cleverness is displayed in it.

The third scene is that of the execution, which is stopped by the reappearing Anderson. It is quite thrilling, and approaches very nearly to true tragedy.

Every character is admirably sketched. Richard, the foe of sentimentality, kind-hearted and bitter-tongued, a true descendant of the puritans. He does not follow any conventional morality, and is therefore the most amiable character in the play. He acts from his own initiative, on his own responsibility, and infects all that surround him with activity and joy. Some sensualists explained his sacrifice from the erotic point of view: by his love to the clergyman's wife, Judith. Surely nothing could be as strange to B. Shaw as this. He, as a true puritan, makes his hero face death not for the woman he loves, but for the woman he does not love. Not sexual

attraction is the secret of heroism, but the man who is a hero acts heroically.

General Burgoyne is a favourite type with B. Shaw. There is a kind of aristocracy about him. Loyal and fair to his fellow men, clear-sighted, truthful, free of prejudices, and of hypocrisy. His "Let me persuade you to be hanged" is admirable. He does not search for false excuses for the crime they are about to commit. He is manly enough to confess that he has to do it no matter whether the man deserves it or not.

Also all the other characters are as artistically designed as anything from the pen of B. Shaw.

### • CÆSAR AND CLEOPATRA.

Before writing his "Man and Superman," in which comedy the father of the Superman appears, B. Shaw has created the Superman himself in the person of Julius Cæsar. The great Cæsar, the Superman, is the simplest man of all. He is always natural, and doing just the thing you would expect of a man under such circumstances. That is the secret of greatness. Because genius means proportion. But the normal proportionate man is not the rule, but the exception, just like normal sight is the exception.

In contrast to this genius B. Shaw has created Cleopatra a romantic, clever, half-child, half-woman. And this half-child is the only person who really understands Cæsar.

When Pothinus tells her that he does not understand Cæsar she answers "You understand Cæsar! How could you? I do—by instinct."\*

Cleopatra understands Cæsar because also she is "part brute, part woman, and part God—nothing of man" in her.

The secret of Cæsar's superiority does not lie in the fact that he loves more than ordinary men do, but that he hates less. "Cæsar loves no one," says Cleopatra. "Who are these we love? Only those whom we do not hate: all people are strangers and enemies to us except those we love. But it is not so with Cæsar. He has no hatred in him: he makes friends with everyone as he does with dogs and children."†

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\* Page 169.

† Page 168.



B. Shaw's Cæsar is not the Cæsar of Shakespeare or Mommsen, but, like B. Shaw himself, a philosopher and a man of action who recognises that he does not exist for personal ends, but as an instrument of the Life-Force. He does not do what he likes, but what must be done. That is the great lesson which Cleopatra learns from him. "When I was foolish," she says to Pothinus, "I did what I liked, except when Ftata-teeta beat me; and even then I cheated her, and did it by stealth. Now that Cæsar has made me wise it is no use my liking or disliking; I do what must be done, and have no time to attend to myself. That is not happiness; but it is greatness."\*

In the Appendix B. Shaw says of his hero: "I have been careful to attribute nothing but originality to him. Originality gives a man an air of frankness, generosity, and magnanimity by enabling him to estimate the value of truth, money, or success in any particular instance quite independently of convention and moral generalisation."†

Indeed, his Cæsar is always original—the most original man of all—in spite of his simplicity. He is the great creation of a great artist.

The play contains also a satire on modern Englishmen with their ideals and prejudices. By bringing Britannus on the stage B. Shaw showed us the opinions modern Englishmen entertain. That an early Briton living in the year 48 B.C. should speak like a modern shopkeeper is not so evident. But B. Shaw has a whole theory on the subject: that character depends only on climate, and whatever nation will live under this climate is sure to become like the English,‡ an opinion which I by no means share, and which is not in strict conformity with B. Shaw's own views. He believes that the Superman can be bred. But if everything depend on climate then we must first of all create a new climate favourable to the growth of Superman. Because no amount of breeding will produce the Superman so long as the climate remains the same.

This play stands conspicuously amongst the works of B. Shaw while his Cæsar is a real masterpiece in human characteristics.

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\* Page 167.

† Page 209.

‡ Page 207.



*CAPTAIN BRASSBOUND'S CONVERSION.*

Already in "Cæsar and Cleopatra" B. Shaw treats vengeance as too mean for men. When Cleopatra says in her defence after having avenged Pothinus for his slander :

"If one man in all Alexandria can be found to say that I did wrong, I swear to have myself crucified on the door of the palace by my own slaves,"

Cæsar replies :

"If one man in the world can be found, now or forever, to know that you did wrong, that man will have either to conquer the world as I have, or be crucified by it."\*

In "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" the same theme is again discussed. Captain Brassbound has nourished all his life through the idea to revenge on his uncle, the English Justice, Sir Howard Hallam, the crime which he believes the latter has committed against the captain's mother.

The uncle and nephew meet in Morocco, and they would soon have sent each other to destruction were it not for the presence of Sir Hallam's sister-in-law, Lady Cicely Waynflete, who sees the cruel ambition of the two, and the insanity of revenge. She saves at first the uncle from the revenge of his nephew, disarming the captain who is burning after revenge by making him ridiculous in his own eyes. She tells him that he is just like his uncle, but the other is getting for it £5,000 a year while he wants to do it for nothing.

B. Shaw is quite successful in his ridiculing the English Justice in the person of Sir Howard Hallam. But not only the English Justice is ridiculed here, but the whole idea of the state revenging wrongs committed. Because instead of reforming the criminal they simply shut up the poor wretch for some years to let him out afterwards still more helpless and dangerous.

The true hero of this play is not Captain Brassbound, but Lady Cicely Waynflete. She sees how much fault and wrong is on each side. After having saved the uncle from the revenge of his nephew, when Sir Hallam is mean enough to take advantage of the changed situation, she induces him to let

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\* Page 186.

sleeping dogs lie. The secret of her charm is her greatness. With her simple "How do you do?" with which she disarms even cannibals, she has the features of true humanity, real greatness of thought and purpose. And along with Candida and Major Barbara she is the greatest tribute paid to women by the artist B. Shaw.

### MAN AND SUPERMAN.

We have treated till now B. Shaw as a critic of life, manners, society, morals, art, and war. In "Man and Superman," which is one of the best samples of B. Shaw's philosophic genius, the philosopher appears. It is an attempt to re-state the problem of the creation of the Superman.

The idea of Superman is very old in literature. Nearly every great man has produced one, each being the creation of his own fancy. The Mittler of Schleiermacher, Byron's Cain and Manfred, Shelley's Prometheus, Nietzsche's Superman can serve as examples, they are all creations characteristic to each of them. But history has failed to produce the desired reform. That has disillusioned B. Shaw about progress. He has come to see that humanity did not really advance to become Supermen with the advancement of our institutions, as has been the hope of our fathers, because there are many obstacles to the working of the Life-Force which tends to bring about the Superman. These being our so-called morality, inequality of sex, conventionality, private property. All these obstacles must be swept away first in order that the Life-Force could work unrestrained towards its own purpose.

Although B. Shaw has borrowed the idea and the name Superman of F. Nietzsche yet there is a great difference in the whole conception of it by the two. Nietzsche believed European nihilism to be the outcome of the intermingling of masters and slaves, by the disappearance of caste. And he believed accordingly the Superman to be realisable by a small number of masters separated from the troop of slaves. But B. Shaw opposes this class philosophy of Nietzsche. He does not want the individual Superman, or a few aristocratic Supermen, but he wants all to become Supermen. "We want a democracy of Supermen," he says.

But by which means are we to get the Superman? By the simplest of all: by means of sexual selection. He believes that "what can be done with a wolf can be done with a man." The man of the future must not be taught; he must be bred. "Fancy trying to produce a greyhound or a racehorse by education!"\* says B. Shaw.

This notion of producing Supermen by the methods of the stud-farm is quite as erroneous as it is impracticable. You cannot breed men. First of all because you cannot order men whom to love. Another difficulty to the realisation of it is: that if we take two species, each of which has its own faults, we cannot expect that we shall get an ideal from them. Because the child might inherit all the faults of the father in addition to all those which it had inherited of the mother. If we want to get a good horse by means of selection and pairing we take two good horses. Another difficulty is who is to choose these couples? Must we not give birth to a God first that should arrange this whole breeding factory?

There is another question one is inclined to ask: Is it true that the Life-Force is working for a higher type, for a Superman? Also Schopenhauer, who considers love to be only a sexual attraction, tries to prove in his "Metaphysik der Geschlechtstriebe" that the only aim in this attraction is the production of the physically best type. But we cannot suppose that only breeding could produce a race of Supermen. Because for this must exist a certain *milieu*, education, and the whole society must first be transformed. It is on all these things that the formation of our characters depends much upon.

B. Shaw, like all social reformers, is a great optimist. He is believing in the birth of a new and better society and of the Superman. His Superman will be an extremely ethical and moral person. But he will believe in his own morality, which is not the one we consider as such. He will bring about new ideas on honour, duty, morality, ethics, religion, right and justice.

Also the old Don Juan problem is reinstated in this play. And he is no more the hunter but the hunted, no more a seducer of women but terribly afraid of them. Not in vain

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\* Page 182.

did the modern Don Juan study Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Ibsen. He does not revolt any more against God and the devil, but against modern society, not in vain did he study H. George and K. Marx. He is also no longer a romanticist longing for love, and willing to undergo for its sake anything, but a philosopher and sage, struggling for his freedom. This modern Don Juan's opinions on marriage are also original. He says :

“ Marriage is to me apostasy, profanation of the sanctuary of my soul, violation of my manhood, sale of my birthright, shameful surrender, ignominious capitulation, acceptance of defeat.”\*

This Don Juan is an author. He wrote a “ shocking ” book in which love, marriage, Superman, and many other questions of importance are treated. This book B. Shaw gives as an appendix to the play, under the title “ The Revolutionist's Handbook and Pocket Companion.”

The initiative in love was usually attributed to man, and it is quite clear why. Man being more active, with greater passion, was always believed to be the attacking. But B. Shaw has quite changed the whole business of the thing. He, as a true puritan, represents the women as Eve of the Bible : always tempting the man. Like a spider the woman spreads her web in order to catch the man in it and fulfil the world's purpose, the will of the Life-Force. And this Life-Force tells her to continue life at all costs, even at the cost of her own life. Love is no longer a romantic adventure, a thing that makes life worth living, but a tragedy. A tragedy because it is our fate which we cannot escape, and to which purpose we are sacrificed at the cost of our better self, at the cost of those things that make a man deserve the name Man. We see the woman hunting the man, not because she loves him, but in order that he shall become the father of her child. An idea, perhaps, not so evident. Love is treated not as a romantic illusion, but a kind of fascination that exists only for the continuation of the race.

The first two acts of “ Man and Superman ” are typical and realistic. Ann Whitefield is a clever girl of the middle or higher class who knows how to force her way through. She

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\* Page 169.

is everywoman just as Don Juan of the older play was everyman. The Life-Force works through woman, and urges her to the perpetuation of her kind.

The hero dashes across Europe in a motor car pursued by Ann Whitefield, whom he is destined to marry. He lands among a humorous set of Spanish brigands, the chief of whom has been a waiter at the Savoy. The introduction scene between the brigand chief and the hero is characteristic.

*Mendoza* : I am a brigand : I live by robbing the rich.

*Tanner* : I am a gentleman : I live by robbing the poor.

Shake hands.\*

In the third act the hero has a dream in which the Sierra Nevada is transformed into a modernised Hell in which his Mozartian ancestor, Don Juan Tenorio, Dona Anna, the statue of the Commandeur, and the devil appear. They philosophise at great length in B. Shaw's usual clever way on all possible questions like love, marriage, morality, Superman, and other philosophical items.

Of special interest is the duel between Ann and Tanner in the fourth act. J. Tanner is struggling for his liberty. But the instinct of the Life-Force conquers, and, like always in the sex duel, the man is defeated. The genius of producing thought is defeated by the genius of producing life, and he lets himself be married by Ann.

"Man and Superman" is the most important work of B. Shaw. At any rate he conceived it as such. There are moments of great emotion, and it is full of clever dialogue, whimsical situations, which denote the true dramatist. The play met with deserved success, and it has greatly helped to spread B. Shaw's popularity as a philosopher and thinker.

## JOHN BULL'S OTHER ISLAND.

After the composition of "Man and Superman" B. Shaw again returns to his worldly criticism. This time the relation between England and Ireland is described in which the figure of the all-conquering England is symbolised in the figure of

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\* Page 78.



Tom Broadbent; this Englishman, narrow-minded, but of a strong will, who simply grasps the things he wants. He is as perfect a character as possible, and could only be drawn by a great artist. Tom Broadbent has already been accepted as a true portrait of the average Englishman who sympathises with Irish, Macedonians, Finns, Poles, and does not see what is under his nose in his own country where men need perhaps more his sympathy than these far remotest strangers. This Broadbent comes to Ireland, where within twenty-four hours he practically secures his seat in Parliament, takes their land, builds railways, and conquers Nora Reilly, the dreamy romantic Irish girl that lives in a world as unreal as possible. She flies from reality and creates her own world of beauty and symbolism according to her taste and fancy.

The Englishman, Broadbent, conquers everywhere and everything. Because the Irish live only in their fancy dreaming of their past, but not within reality. That is why when to this nation comes the practical Englishman to whom everything is clear, and who knows what he wants, he is bound to conquer the dreamy Irish. Because the man of intellect is more fit for practical life than the man of instinct.

In opposition to this practical man B. Shaw has created the Irish friend and business partner of Tom Broadbent, the Anglicised Irishman, Larry Doyle, a half-dreamer, half-cynic. He is a very good portrait of a romantic type who prefers to go about longing after the things he wants instead of getting them.

All the other Irish types are as true to life as could be. The clever, practical clergyman, Father Dempsey, this man with a boundless authority over his flock, is very well described. He is the real master of these poor superstitious men, commanding them and keeping them in awe. He enjoys unlimited power over them, but is fully conscious of the great responsibility that lies on him as their priest.

His opponent, the uncloaked clergyman, Keegan, this dreamer of dreams, pantheist and romanticist, is a special favourite character with B. Shaw. In the twilight, when the enchanted evening slowly approaches, he speaks with the grasshopper of Ireland's future. With the artistic might of genius B. Shaw has understood this romantic character, and endowed him with extraordinary beauty.

Also Patsy Farrel, this superstitious poor slave, Haffigan as

foolish and superstitious as Jatsy, the Talmi Irishman of Glasgow that appeals to the liberality of the fools, are all perfectly drawn.

“John Bull’s Other Island,” in spite of its beauties and other great qualities, is specially English, as it deals of the relation between the two islands, and is probably not to be appreciated to its full value on the Continent. But the fine characteristics, the wit, and its poetic beauties are sure to point it out as a real masterpiece which should not be restricted to the enjoyment of one country only, but to all men that enjoy artistic beauty, wit, and humour.

### MAJOR BARBARA.

“Major Barbara” is a picture of social life in England. The first act takes place in the saloon of Lady Britomart Undershaft. She is married to Andrew Undershaft, a cannon manufacturer, a kind of Krupp, but whom she has not seen for many years. Now she wants money to give her two daughters a decent dowry, and her son a “start” in life, and she invites her husband. He comes. For his daughter Sarah, who is engaged to a man from society, and for his son Stephen he has no interest, but his daughter Barbara, and the professor of Greek with whom she is in love, he recognises as people of his own brand. Barbara tells her father of the good work done by the Salvation Army, and invites him to the Salvation Army shelter, while he wants to give her an idea of his great destruction factory, and invites his family to visit it.

In the second act we are in the West Ham shelter of the Salvation Army, where we make acquaintance with some typical representatives of the Salvation Army. They relate the story of their past and conversion. In order to make this conversion seem more remarkable they paint their own characters as black as possible. The Army stands in need of money and accepts from a whisky brewer £5,000, and the same amount from Undershaft. That is too much for Barbara. She can no longer belong to a society that accepts money derived from such sources. At the visit of her father’s factory she recognises that it is her duty to stay here in this vast field for propaganda. The professor of Greek does the same, and is adopted by Undershaft to be his follower in the

trade, as he recognises that his son is no good for it. By adopting his future son-in-law he follows also the old tradition that the possessor must be an adopted foundling.

“Major Barbara” is one of the most interesting plays of B. Shaw. Original and well-devised characters abound. In it he again returns to the problems set forth in his “Unpleasant Plays,” but B. Shaw has meanwhile developed and become a greater artist. He indicates in this play an insight penetrating deeply below surfaces, and a philosophy that embraces nearly the whole of human life.

The main idea of the work is—that it is a crime to endure poverty, because poverty is the root of all evil. Even the noblest enthusiasm fails under the brute power of the contemptible metal. It is the mammoth millionaire that is the master in modern society. He rules everything, because he has wealth, and wealth means power. A liberation will only be possible when we are freed of mammon’s rule, when the corrupted man’s money will no longer be able to buy everything.

Whatever may be B. Shaw’s opinions of the methods on which the Salvation Army does her work, yet he admires the idealism, the inspiration with which that work is done by many of its members. They are quite in earnest about their work, believing in its great importance. He admires religion, because it gives that belief that makes man truly great. The belief that is essential to all great men, whether they be poets or revolutionaries, idealists or rulers.

The three chief heroes of the play stand conspicuously one against the other. The King of Darkness, Undershaft, who is an interesting study of a man who is free from all subservience to conventions. He is a self-made millionaire, and, as a character, a further development of Sartorius. His moral theory is: “Thou shalt starve ere I starve.” Undershaft confesses that his religion is “Money and Gunpowder.” Because our society is so organised that only men that possess plenty of both can attain everything else in life. That is why men lust after money, and are willing to kill, murder, and commit all sorts of crimes for it.

His family despises his trade, but as soon as he shows them his kingdom of industry they are all converted to his ideals, and admire him for his organising skill.

That the whole world cannot consist of Undershafts is quite clear. But would such a thing be possible how different might the world look! What would the earth be like if inhabited by men with an intention to be happy at all costs!

In our present system a large proportion of mankind is insufficiently clad and insufficiently fed in order that a small class of capitalists may have more food, clothing, and money than it knows what to do with. In order to have these things going on we must have an army and police, prisons and justices, hospitals and workhouses. All these "pretty institutions" are unworthy of a human nation. It is clear that the only solution to the question possible is to do away with poverty. "I was a dangerous man until I had my will," says Undershaft, "now I am a useful, beneficent, kindly person."

It is certainly the duty of religion to do away with these abnormal conditions. But the modern church leads the attention of the poor in the wrong direction, and that is why the poor let all these evils exist.

Also the Salvation Army works in the interest of the rich and existing order. And B. Shaw's attitude towards it will be clear from the conversation between the leading members and Undershaft.

*Mrs. Baines* : You see how we take the anger and the bitterness against you out of their hearts, Mr. Undershaft.

*Undershaft* : It is certainly most convenient and gratifying to all large employers of labour, Mrs. Baines.\*

Again in the dialogue between Undershaft and the Greek professor Cusins the same question is discussed.

*Undershaft* : All religious organisations exist by selling themselves to the rich.

*Cusins* : Not the Army. That is the church of the poor.

*Undershaft* : All the more reason for buying it.

*Cusins* : I don't think you quite know what it does for the poor.

*Undershaft* : Oh yes, I do. It draws their teeth : that is enough for me as a man of business.

*Cusins* : Nonsense! It makes them sober—

*Undershaft* : I prefer sober workmen. The profits are larger.

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\* Page 244.



*Cusins* : Honest—

*Undershaft* : Honest workmen are most economical.

*Cusins* : Attached to their homes—

*Undershaft* : So much the better. They will put up with anything sooner than change their shop.

*Cusins* : Happy—

*Undershaft* : An invaluable safeguard against revolution.

*Cusins* : Unselfish—

*Undershaft* : Indifferent to their own interests, which suits me exactly.

*Cusins* : With their thoughts on heavenly things.

*Undershaft* : And not on Trade Unionism nor Socialism. Excellent.\*

That is why B. Shaw is against the church. Because it makes poverty, crime, and misery endurable. It extinguishes all revolt from the hearts of the poor. Such a state is abnormal because it makes these conditions everlasting.

“Major Barbara” suggests also the failure of charity to solve the social problems and its absolute impossibility to cope with the question. Instead of helping to solve the problem we go on breeding paupers and criminals from one generation to another. Because we purposely shut our eyes to the fact that the only possible solution of the question is to do away with poverty. That is why B. Shaw wants us to preach that “poverty is a crime, the worst of crimes, because it is the originator of all evils.”

And Cusins, the professor of Greek, who becomes a cannon manufacturer in order “to make power for the world,” is also one of B. Shaw’s favourite characters and a true representative of a higher morality. He says :

“As a teacher of Greek I gave the intellectual man weapons against the common man. I now want to give the common man weapons against the lawyer, the doctor, the priest, the literary man, the professor, the artist, and the politician, who, once in authority, are the most dangerous, disastrous, and tyrannical of all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a democratic power strong enough

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\* Page 236.



to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good or else perish.”\*

But the most interesting character in this play is the one that gave the title to the play, Major Barbara, Undershaft's eldest daughter. She is a further development of Vivien Warren and a sister to Candida and Lady Waynflete. Dissatisfied with ordinary “society” life she joins the Salvation Army, where she is happy for a time, conscious that she is now before a wider life and active in the fulfilment of a purpose far above “society” interests and doings. But her happiness is not destined to continue long. When she sees how much the Salvation Army depends on the money of the Undershafts and Bodgers she leaves it for a wider field of activeness.

Although it is, perhaps, vulgar to identify an author with the creation of his fancy, yet one cannot but remark that this active, clever, idealistic girl to whom the idleness of her own class, their foolish drawing-room talks, are so detestable, and who is longing to establish Heaven on earth, is the spokesman of the author himself, a picture of B. Shaw, the social reformer.

### *HOW HE LIED TO HER HUSBAND.*

The volume containing “John Bull's Other Island” and “Major Barbara” contains also a trifle entitled “How He Lied to Her Husband.” B. Shaw tells us in the preface to it that he composed it in four days. It would be idle work to seek significance in a work like this, but it is humorous, witty and diverting. Some of the critics wrongly supposed it to be a satire upon his own characters in “Candida,” what it is certainly not. It is only a satire against the public, those that go to the theatres for sexual emotion, vulgar lovers who dress in romantic clothes by accepting the names of heroes of romantic plays, poems or novels.

Mr. Apjohn, this member of a boxing club who is scribbling poems, is as far below Marchbanks as Mrs. Bompas is below Candida, and the vulgar, brutish Mr. Bompas is below Morell. B. Shaw has no sympathy with such people, and ridicules them in this clever satire.

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\* Page 289.

• THE ADMIRABLE BASHVILLE. •

About twenty years after having written "Cashel Byron's Profession," B. Shaw saw himself obliged to dramatise it for the stage in order to prevent its being dramatised by someone else. He composed then "The Admirable Bashville or Constancy Unrewarded," his blank verse parody on the Elizabethan drama in three acts. The hero of it is no longer the prize-fighter Cashel Byron, but Lydia's accomplished servant Bashville. It is characteristic that after the lapse of twenty years the original hero and his love story interest the author no more, but the practical, common sense servant instead.

In "Cashel Byron's Profession" B. Shaw treated the pugilist with a certain sympathy. He makes this boxer explain to an aristocratic audience that a man can be of any trade and be a gentleman. That it is not birth that makes a man noble, but something else. He compares the prize-fighter with the politician and artist, and proves that there is no great difference between these. Indeed the prize-fighters are more moral than the lawyers and judges, court and tribunal. But here B. Shaw committed a small blunder. He endowed his boxer not only with strong fists, but with something more important: with a kind heart and part of his own genius. It is true one can say: Why not suppose a boxer with great intelligence and speaking like a philosopher? Yes, but such boxers are not common in life. But B. Shaw only wanted to tell us that it is foolish to treat a man as something inferior if he is earning his bread in the sweat of his brow, whether he be a boxer or common labourer. I imagine men like Knut Hamsun or Gorki going about and doing all kinds of rough work for some foolish rich peasant who surely thought himself far above his manual workman. B. Shaw tells us that we must not judge of men by their riches, birth or trade, but by what they really are, their genius. In the fight between "mean" birth and aristocracy B. Shaw always lets the "mean" conquer, because they form the real aristocracy of genius, while the so-called aristocrats are mostly poor degenerated people. Also the hero of another "novel of his nonage," Conolly, is far above his aristocratic acquaintances. He is not only a good mechanic, but a great inventor, musician, singer, and philosopher.

"The Admirable Bashville" is certainly not entitled to

rank with B. Shaw's better works. It is interlarded with quotations from Shakespeare, Marlowe, and others. But sometimes he forgets his intention of burlesque and indulges in rhetoric of a very forcible type. Such lines as the hero's denunciation of the modern civilisation and the Zulu king's output against white men are good types of rhetoric, of a quality which we are accustomed with in the works of B. Shaw.

### THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA.

As early as 1896 B. Shaw wrote in "The Saturday Review" about the medical profession :

"The average doctor is a walking compound of natural ignorance and acquired witchcraft, who kills your favourite child, wrecks your wife's health, and orders you into habits of nervous dram-drinking before you have the courage to send him about his business, and take your chance as a gentleman."

In "The Philanderer" we saw B. Shaw's first sketch of Dr. Paramore, which is a satire against the medical profession. Now he again takes up this theme, but on a larger scale, and has developed it into a four-act play with a preface of about ninety pages.

Medical men in our days have assumed an attitude as if they were a new priesthood and are adopting privileges to which they are by no means entitled. All their assumptions often sound like a great humbug. They claim the privilege of your confessor and what not? And are they always at the height of their posts? Many of them care very little for the responsibility of their position, and are only ordinary quacks.

These pretensions of the doctors came under the lash of B. Shaw, who as a real hater of all kinds of profanation dedicated a whole play to them, and it can justly be said that since Molière's time there never was such a beautiful satire on the medical profession.

"The Doctor's Dilemma," although entitled a tragedy, has much of the humorous satirical elements in it. The first act takes place in the room of a London doctor for lung diseases who has discovered a remedy against consumption, and has been knighted for this discovery. His friends meet to con-

gratulate him, and we learn to know some of the representatives of the medical world. Now appears the beautiful young Jennifer Dubedat, the wife of a famous painter that is suffering from consumption. She asks the doctor to accept her husband as a patient and thus save a great genius to art. Jennifer impresses him very much, and he decides to make acquaintance with the artist in order to see whether he is worth to be preferred to another, as there is only one vacant place and many candidates. He invites the painter and his wife to a party, and he sees that Louis Dubedat, although a great artist, is a man of loose moral principles who has deceived his wife many times, and does not deserve her love. Shall Sir Colenso save the life of this immoral but great man or the life of an old friend who is also suffering from consumption? That is the doctor's dilemma. B. Shaw understands to put this problem in such light as to prove what a great master in psychology he is. Especially the solution of the question is of interest. Sir Colenso knows that there are plenty of respectable nobodies but very few great artists. He also wants to please the beautiful Jennifer and would like her to live in the deception that her husband is an hero and a noble man. But should Dubedat remain alive, then she must find him out one day, and her life will be ruined. Is it not better that he shall die so that he may live in her memory as the hero she created for herself, and at the end he himself will be able to marry her? He therefore decides to take his friend in and gives Dubedat over to another famous physician who manages to kill him very soon.

In the fourth act Dubedat dies in the hands of Jennifer. Near his deathbed assemble four famous doctors and a journalist who came to note down the last words of the famous painter. Dubedat speaks many tirades against modern society and its moral canons and confesses that he is a follower of the most original thinker—B. Shaw. He asks his wife not to mourn after him and to marry soon again.

After his death Jennifer arranges an exhibition of her husband's paintings. At the exhibition she meets with Sir Colenso and tells him that she has married again according to the desire of her late husband.

Although this play is announced a tragedy, it is in fact only a satire against the medical men that have forgotten that their

aim is to cure. But there is also a tragedy in the situation of Sir Colenso, the man of age, who is still longing after personal happiness and is terribly disappointed. It is the law of nature that youth should tend to youth, and his late passion contains real tragical elements. But Sir Colenso did not kill the artist in order to marry his wife; it is his puritan sense, which prefers the honest ordinary man to the genius who is a blackguard, that led him to take in his friend and not the artist. Sir Colenso's choice is also B. Shaw's, and it is foolish to suppose that this artist is a disciple of B. Shaw. It sounds like mockery when he says that he is one, because B. Shaw is by far not so indifferent to moral questions as this man. And it is Sir Patrick's abhorrence of the immoral man that the author shares. Nothing, not even genius, may allow a man to become immoral. In "The Sanity of Art" B. Shaw speaks of Dubedat:

"In my last play, "The Doctor's Dilemma," I recognised this by dramatising a rascally genius, with the disquieting result that several highly intelligent and sensitive persons passionately defended him, on the ground, apparently, that high artistic faculty and an ardent artistic imagination entitle a man to be recklessly dishonest about money and recklessly selfish about women, just as kingship in an African tribe entitles a man to kill whom he pleases on the most trifling provocation."\*

The whole play is exceptionally well written. The humorous caricatures of different types of physicians and surgeons are remarkably well drawn, and it is as brilliantly clever and whimsical as we are accustomed to in the works of B. Shaw.

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\* Page 11.



## THE ARTIST.

Art is the great stimulus to life.

—F. Nietzsche.

B. Shaw has never recognised the formula *l'art pour l'art*. Indeed he says that he would never write a line for the sake of art. But the things necessary to produce a good book, a work of art, are : talent, genius, and a practical hand, all things which B. Shaw possesses in great measure. His artistic apprehension is very clear, acute, far seeing, and always directed to some higher object. Not like the artist pure and simple who, while at work, may be conscious of nothing but the instinct to create things. B. Shaw has some higher aim in view. Were he not an artist and his dramas works of art he would be noticed by no one, and soon pass into oblivion, as so many others did, while his reputation is spreading slowly and surely in America as well as in Europe.

You cannot read or see B. Shaw's plays without being amused, touched or moved. His writing is nobly and touchingly eloquent. and there is abundance of clever dialogue in it. B. Shaw has a keen instinct for theatrical points and the understanding of characters by intuition that denotes the great artist. He has created quite a gallery of characters which will range along with Shakespeare's, Goethe's, Dickens', and other great masters in describing human nature.

It is sometimes asserted that B. Shaw's historical personages do not act as we should expect them according to history, but they are creations of B. Shaw, and modern creations too, which have nothing in common with the men they are supposed to represent. This accusation B. Shaw partly acknowledges, but he justly contends that also Shakespeare did the same thing. There is no doubt that Shakespeare in his Roman plays introduced men of the Elizabethan England. In spite of this we are sure each time that the man is acting and speaking just as we should expect a man of this stamp would act at that remote age. But the thing with B. Shaw is that although he gives us as admirably and truly a character as we could expect he often spoils the whole thing by the introduction of journalistic fireworks. He makes his early Briton speak like a

London shopkeeper of the twentieth century, and he produces a whole theory to show that character depends on climate only and that he was right to suppose that an early Briton was exactly like a modern one.\* Surely we can not explain everything with climate only, as the whole form of production, culture, civilisation, are at least as important factors as climate. But Britannus is a very good character on the stage, representing a certain modern class, and you can point out amongst your acquaintances hundreds of Britannuses.

There is no reason to say that B. Shaw is no artist because his plays are social plays, with a tendency. It is clear that not always are works with a tendency unartistic productions. Indeed, if we would say such a thing we must discard all the works of Tolstoy, Ibsen, Zola, and many other great artists. The greatest artists did not write simply for art's sake, but because they had something to say. Although they are all tending to the same end yet the artistic methods are quite different. Take any play or novel of Ibsen or Tolstoy and practically from the beginning it is quite clear where the author is driving to. But B. Shaw is not so simple, and that is the reason why he is so grossly misunderstood, and mostly by those that are trying to explain others all their lives through—the journalists. B. Shaw does not preach seriously like Ibsen's Brand, who thunders against all moral lies. His heroes ridicule. He does not say that a man that surrounds himself with conventional lies is a bad man, but that each man surrounded with these lies is a caricature. And it makes more impression, it works better. Because there he appeals only to human conscience, here he touches human vanity.

B. Shaw will not permit his men and women to live in a world of illogical sentimentality. He believes that every man can achieve real greatness if he be only natural. All animals and plants live according to the laws of their nature, to fulfil their destiny. Only man is never satisfied with what he is or what he possesses. He is ashamed of his occupation, and wants to seem richer. If he is a merchant he is dissatisfied because he is not a famous poet, gifted artist, or great statesman. While B. Shaw believes that every man can be great whatever his occupation be, if he only does the thing with his

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\* *Vide* Britannus, page 207.

whole soul and what he really has abilities to. The true hero of "Arms and the Man" is not the poseur Saranoff, but the practical Bluntshli. And there is another person in this play whom B. Shaw respects, that is the servant Nicola. Also in "You Never Can Tell" it is the waiter that is the real hero of the play, and again when he took up to dramatise "Cashel Byron's Profession" it was not the original hero of the novel in which the author took an interest after the lapse of twenty years, but the accomplished servant Bashville.

For B. Shaw the New man is born already, but not the Superman. And this New man is always the practical, able, matter-of-fact, and common sense man. His Conolly of "The Irrational Knot," the waiter William of "You Never Can Tell" are these men. But in spite of their originality all his characters are human, they are as realistic as they are original. The philosophical Lady Waynflete disarming savages with her simple "How do you do?", the matter-of-fact Miss Warren, the clever idealistic Barbara, the romantic, sympathetic Judith, the great capitalist and slave of his business, Undershaft, his various types of clergymen, the Justice Sir H. Hallam committing crimes in the name of law, Brassbound, whom human injustice has driven to become a pirate, his Cæsar and Napoleon, all of them are human and natural.

He observes the vices of our social life, and excels in expressing the dissatisfaction of the best minds of our time which suffocate in this atmosphere of hypocrisy and false respectability. As an artist, B. Shaw recognises no standard forms but creates his own, and there is combined in him the power of observation with philosophical imagination, the enthusiasm of the reformer with the pathos of the artist. He is the combination of artist and thinker who investigates and explains the world of emotions and motives. That is the secret why his plays draw the attention and interest of all lovers of true art. B. Shaw understands to present the most common things in quite an original light, and his heroes are always speaking and acting as you would expect them under similar circumstances. He finds the exact words which you would expect them to say, and that is true art. We can say of B. Shaw that he translates and makes clear to us the wishes, thoughts, desires, dreams, and longings of our age.

B. Shaw being an experienced critic composed to his plays

long and interesting prefaces. These prefaces are an original literary invention. They are marvellous exhibitions of the mental originality of their author. They are as ingenious as they are amusing, and denote true examples of their author's consistent logic. The effect produced by these prefaces is quite singular. It gives to his plays the charm of a novel. Not only are they good comments and explanations of the plays, they also contain historical and personal excursions in the best manner on all different questions of the day. Vivisection, censorship, war, biographical notes, criticism of the present theatre. They are witty essays with issues of the moment just as well as more subtle and important questions.

It is characteristic for an artist to draw his heroes in the process of formation of their characters. His works are mainly studies of human types, not the life of our bodies does he describe like the realists do, but that of our souls. That is why one must not suppose that conversations like the one between Tanner and Ann really take place :

*Ann* : Well, if you don't want to be married you needn't be.

*Tanner* : Does any man want to be hanged? Yet men let themselves be hanged without a struggle for life, though they could at least give the chaplain a black eye. We do the world's will, not our own. I have a frightful feeling that I shall let myself be married because it is the world's will you should have a husband.\*

It is what our souls speak, the thoughts of men said aloud. That is what makes a drama lifelike. No dramatist must make his heroes speak like in real life. The dramatist must omit unnecessary talk just as well as he must make his heroes say things that are never spoken in ordinary life, but only thought of. In that sense it is not a real conversation, yet it is what the conversing people think. A modern cultivated man seldom expresses in private conversation his real opinions. We make love, meet friends and visitors, and do we always speak freely with them? Surely not. How rude would a man be considered if he would say the truth to his visitors, whom he simply wants to clear out. We also do not give exterior signs of joy or pain. We call the man of our society vulgar and

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\* Page 169.



the nations barbarians that do it. But the poet must describe the opinions and passions of the man, and the only means to do it is to make him say things which are in reality never spoken.

The ideas of B. Shaw are not new, but undoubtedly new is the manner in which he expresses them. He is fighting for many a thing for which plenty of other writers fought, but in each instance he cleverly brings out new arguments, new proofs to persuade us to his point of view. He, the artist, opposes everything mean and immoral, because it is ugly and unnatural; the Mrs. Warrens and the Crofts that support them and are partners in their business. To all his ideas he gives artistic and concrete definitions. He is no artist *an und fuer sich* because he has no interest in describing nature, but it is always the problem he puts to life and solves that denote the true artist.

### B. SHAW'S RELATION TO OTHER ARTISTS.

Oh, that the poets would again be such  
as they were wont to be, seers fore-  
telling us something of our possible  
future! —F. Nietzsche.

We cannot speak of B. Shaw as being a follower of somebody. Because he is first of all a leader who is always original, sparkling with humour and brilliancy. What we can speak of is his relation to other artists and thinkers, as there is always a certain relation between them. I do not mean to say that they actually borrow ideas one from the other, but they have always something in common between themselves. Every great man inherits, to a certain extent, what has been produced by his predecessors of genius. But he does not simply accept the inheritance, but revolutionises it, and it becomes something different. To trace the influences of other great men on B. Shaw would require a long study. That is why I must restrict myself only to few, whose relation to him is most conspicuous.

In the preface to "Major Barbara." B. Shaw confesses to have been influenced by Lever. Belfort Bax, and Samuel Butler. But a suggestion that he owed much to Ibsen and Maupassant has drawn from B. Shaw a long letter in "The



Daily Chronicle ” in which he sketched the sanitary conditions of St. Pancras and the war between America and Spain, and remarked : “ If a dramatist living in a world like this has to go to books for his ideas and his inspiration he must be both blind and deaf.”

Indeed, B. Shaw came to the same ideas independently of Ibsen. Already in his early novels many of the ideas common to both of them are expressed. Because ideas are usually not invented by one person, by a hero. When society becomes ripe for changes the idea of the necessity of the change may spring up in the heads of many, many might see that certain changes are necessary in order that the world should go on and progress.

B. Shaw has in common with Ibsen a dislike to everything morally mean, ungenerous, vulgar. But Ibsen is fighting only against the aristocratic and middle-class prejudices and lies while B. Shaw is fighting against aristocracy and middle-class themselves. Ibsen only wants to reform society, but B. Shaw wants to build up a new one based upon more moral and rational principles. Ibsen idealises women while B. Shaw treats them more realistically. Ibsen is an individualist and his works are richer from the individualistic point of view, while B. Shaw is a socialist and his works are by far richer from the social point of view. Ibsen is the greater poet of the two, while B. Shaw is the greater social reformer. If Ibsen is the utopian socialist so B. Shaw is the practical one. But the chief dissimilarity between the two is that Ibsen is essentially tragic, while B. Shaw is mainly comic. Ibsen's pessimism contrasts strongly with B. Shaw's optimism.

Also the artistic methods of the two are different. Ibsen tries to improve our morals by describing heroes, like Brand, who by their sacrifices, preaching and action, try to convince us for the good, while B. Shaw ridicules everything morally mean and shows to us how everything immoral is vulgar, ugly, ridiculous.

There is common to both of them the interest for moral problems, the belief that our modern conceptions are the cause of our slavery, because we are unable to free ourselves from obsolete ideas, superstitions, conventions, and narrow-mindedness. Ibsen also fought all his life through against the philistines, pedants, and middle-class prejudices. He was quite in

earnest against all the conventional lies, especially the false relations between husband and wife in the present system of marriage. Also Ibsen was democratic enough to long for the happiness of the whole humanity. He does not want, like Nietzsche, a superman for the sake of superman. His superman becomes great in his service to humanity which he wants to raise to a higher standard, to make it more noble, greater. And in this respect the individualist Ibsen has more in common with the socialist B. Shaw than with the individualist Nietzsche. They are the keenest observers, most spirited, bold, and daring amongst the modern dramatists.

B. Shaw was one of the first pioneers of Ibsen in England, as he always was a fighter for new and great ideas, a champion of every noble cause. That is still more to his credit as it was in opposition to nearly the whole English Press—Liberal and Conservative. He even wrote his “Quintessence of Ibsenism,” which, although a clever composition, still helps us more to understand B. Shaw himself than Ibsen. It is also too much to call it a Quintessence because much that is important to understand Ibsen is not treated at all in this book. Five of his important plays, his poems and letters, all that being important to understand the man, is omitted. And in the greatest works of Ibsen like “Brand” and “The Woman from the Sea,” he does not see what they contain, but what he likes to see in them: a curse of the ideals. But Ibsen was idealist all his life through. His heroes sacrifice their lives to serve humanity. And he was striving for a better understanding between the sexes. That the woman should not be a plaything for the man, but his true friend and helpmate in the struggle of life, and is this not idealism?

“The buffoonery,” says B. Shaw, “is a pretty knack which serves one to attract attention. I share it with Shakespeare and other romantic artists whom I do not take quite as seriously as Bunvan, Blake, Hogarth, Turner, Goethe, Shelley, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Ibsen, Morris, Tolstoy, and Nietzsche.”

Here we have a list of names whom B. Shaw considers working for higher ideals and for a higher purpose as each of them understands it, and who are therefore related to him. But in another place, while again confessing his relation to Nietzsche, B. Shaw says:

“Not for a moment will I suffer anyone to compare

me to him (Nietzsche) as a critic. Never was there a deafer, blinder, socially and politically inept academician.”\*

Yet he has very much in common with Nietzsche even as critic. They are both fighting against romanticism although they are themselves romanticists and against idealism because it can no longer satisfy them. They are fighting against idealism because they are conscious that they have higher ideals, and as men always adhere to the old, to the ideals that were once considered advanced, so they are conscious of the necessity to fight against it in order to do away with all obsolete notions.

They are both haters of philanthropy. At the sight of human misery they do not become compassionate but indignant, and they declare war against a society that suffers such things to exist.

B. Shaw shares with Nietzsche the predilection for women of the romanticists. “When you are going to see a woman don’t forget to take the whip with you,” advises Nietzsche. And he always had the whip with him because he always went to her. But he went to her not because he was indifferent. “The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them: that’s the essence of inhumanity,”† says B. Shaw. Also to Nietzsche is love and hate the same thing. “Even love is hidden hate,” says he. And Nietzsche was always fighting against women not on account of his indifference to them. “The accomplished woman is,” to his opinion, “a higher type than the accomplished man,” and he recognised and praised in the woman her character as being more natural than man’s. “Yes, life is a woman,” says he. “But not only life, the whole nature is revealed to us in the woman.” Is it not a high praise to women from this fighter against everything womanly, effeminate?

Perhaps since the existence of the world there never was a man fighting so hard against everything sacred to men like Nietzsche. He spends all his strength and might in the fight against the soft and effeminate, against pity and compassion.

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\* “Dramatic Opinions and Essays,” Vol. I., page 384.

† “Three Plays for Puritans,” page 33.

"I found compassion to be one of the worst vices," says he. And he speaks with contempt of the "compassionate romanticists." But he is not making war for any certain cause. He wants war for its own sake. "You say that a noble cause halloweth war? I say to you that a good war halloweth every cause." To him there is war everywhere. Already in his first work he has put up the theory of the fight between the Dionysian and Apollonian principles. He even divides morality into a morality of nobles and a morality of slaves and makes the two fight against each other. And he wants to do away with morality, because it is to him the destroyer, spoiler of humanity, for it makes men incapable for war.

Also B. Shaw was a fighter all his life through. He has been fighting against everything mean and for a higher order of things. Also he traces war everywhere, even between the sexes. The secret of beauty in Nietzsche's language is his warlike temperament, also the secret of beauty in B. Shaw's is his fighting style.

B. Shaw writes mostly comedies. But also Nietzsche considered comedy as one of the highest arts. He was even willing to forgive Greece her philosophers for the sake of Aristophanes, so highly did he esteem this ancient playwright and so high an opinion did he entertain of this art.

B. Shaw and Nietzsche are both longing for the Superman. For this Superman B. Shaw has even borrowed the name and idea from Nietzsche while he accepted a modified Darwin's theory of natural selection. But B. Shaw is longing for a nation of Supermen while to Nietzsche the only idea of a democracy of Supermen has given a cold shudder and he conceives it as the worst tyranny.

B. Shaw and Nietzsche see things from a different point of view than others and, as we have seen, very often both of them from the same, while their literary judgments are startling re-valuations of nearly everything, of all questions of importance, to which they gave new definitions in which they have put in new countenance.

Whatever there is great in B. Shaw the French are inclined to ascribe it to French influence. Especially a great deal was said of Molière's influence on him and of the relation between them. In so far as genius and humour are concerned, there is a similarity between them.

But there are greater differences between B. Shaw and Molière than similarities; the former being mainly a satirist



while the latter was mainly a humorist. Molière can delight in pure and simple intrigue comedy, while B. Shaw uses every comedy as a means to teach, propagate, and satirise what he considers ridiculous. Laugh for laugh's sake is the tendency of most of Molière's plays, while B. Shaw is always serious.

Molière treats themes which contain humour already in the idea of the play itself. It is always comical to see a man act against his own principles. A misanthrope who prefers truth to anything in the world and falls in love with a false coquette, the miser who gives a dinner party, the religious who tries to seduce a woman, these are all contrasts that must make an audience laugh. But in B. Shaw it is not so much the comical situation of the hero as the humorous dialogue that makes the audience laugh, that is amusing.

Another difference between the two is that in the works of Molière we have from the beginning to end complete characters, while in B. Shaw we see the characters in their development. It is the highest dramatic life under which a character develops, and his plays are therefore of special dramatic interest. In the plays of B. Shaw there is no plot interest, while in those of Molière there is such. Only in his best plays like "L'Ecole des Maris" he has shifted the plot in the background.

B. Shaw is purely English, or rather Anglo-Irish, and has more in common with his countryman, J. Swift, than with Molière or Voltaire. B. Shaw and Swift are both fearless, independent friends of liberty and champions of the cause of the oppressed. They are both witty, satirical, and sometimes harsh. Their arguments are so plain that the most simple mind might grasp them and they share both a strong sympathy for everything just and an intense hatred against all oppression.

### THE HUMORIST.

My way of joking is to tell the truth; it is the funniest joke in the world.

—B. Shaw.

B. Shaw is a humorist, or rather a satirist. This quality he shares with many other great Irishmen like J. Swift, Oliver



Goldsmith, Laurence Sterne, Oscar Wilde. His satire is launched against pharisaism, hypocrisy, conventionalism, and other human weaknesses or affectations. But his fighting methods are quite different from the other satirists. He never paints the representative of the ideas he criticises as a fool, imbecile, hypocrite, or ignorant man. He chooses the best of his opponents and lets him state his case, and delights in smashing him up. By these means he succeeds much more than other playwrights. His method consists not in bringing the traditional fool, or clown, on the stage in order to make the public laugh. It is his description of life, his showing it in the humorous vein, and first of all the point of view from which he sees and demonstrates it that is humorous. He demonstrates to us by means of his humour the weakness of human character, and points out to us men's follies. And B. Shaw cannot help it not to ridicule and criticise them. Sometimes it even seems as if he had forgotten that it is a comedy, and he becomes serious, or indeed he is always serious and ironical. But his irony is of a very complicated kind. Since men have grown more civilised they believe themselves to have grown also more clever. Of this cleverness and civilisation men entertain very high opinions, people are proud of them. But B. Shaw does not share these high opinions, because he does not believe in progress, and has very poor opinions of our commercial "civilisation," with its prisons and poverty, crime and misery. That is why he is so ironical about this self complacency of men, and his satire sounds more like a declaration of war against society than the mere laugh of the ordinary satirist. There is more tragedy than comedy in his personality; even his jokes are tragical in their substance. He is tragical because he sees the great difference between reality and fancy, so he is fighting for the fantastic future against the vulgar reality which he detests. His teachings, his morals are an appeal to our reason, to our understanding, and a protest against the brutal reality. That is why it is a great pity that many believe or pretend to believe that he is ridiculing for the sake of ridicule and not because he believes in a higher morality, in a better state which he is trying to attain, to bring into existence. Irony is to him only the means to teach, to bring up the public to his morals, to his higher artistic taste. That

is why he will ridicule our conceptions of hero, and our institutions, even our clothes, rooms, furniture, whatever he happens to speak about and whenever he has to describe things that are ridiculous.

Humour is the quality to make people laugh under tears, and the humorist lives with the persons he represents; he seems one of themselves who describes their follies. But the satirist stands above the people he represents as if he has raised himself above the world and sees things from a bird's eye view, and sees all our weakness and follies. This satirical quality is very rare, and we have very few really good satires.

Especially poor has been our literature in good political satires. Since Aristophanes, perhaps also Goethe's "Reinecke Fuchs" and Heine's "Deutschland, ein Wintermärchen," we never had a good political satire. In "Press Cuttings," also prohibited by the censor, B. Shaw successfully attempts to give us a political satire. Two questions which are of great importance to the modern England are there treated: women suffrage and conscription; and it is clear that the progressive B. Shaw is for women's rights and against conscription.

The autocrat of the War Office, General Mitchener, who in an era of conscription shouts wildly "Shoot them down!" whenever he hears outside his window the cry of "Votes for Women!" and who, in order to escape the attention of a militant "anti-suffraget" makes love to a charwoman, is a very interesting character. The Prime Minister Balsquith who flies from his residence to the War Office disguised as a woman in order to hold counsel with General Mitchener is also very well described. Their consultation is disturbed by the appearance of two ladies, deputies of the Anti-Suffraget League, the romantic Lady Corinthia and the vulgar Mrs. Banger, who upset so much the leader of the army and the leader of the politics that the first decides to give civil rights to the army and the second the vote to the women.

Of special interest are two characters in the play, the orderly and the Irish charwoman, future Lady Mitchener. The cockney orderly, who loathes the formalism of the army, and Mrs. Farrell, who is a woman of Shaw's favourite type, are the only persons speaking sense in this play. The conversation between her and Mitchener is of interest.

*Mitchener*: When a man has risked his life on eight

battlefields, Mrs. Farrell, he has given sufficient proof of his self-control to be excused a little strong language.

*Mrs. Farrell*: Would you put up with bad language from me because I have risked me life eight times in childbed?

*Mitchener*: My dear Mrs. Farrell, you surely would not compare a risk of that harmless domestic kind to the fearful risks of the battlefield?

*Mrs. Farrell*: I would not compare risks run to bear living people into the world to risks run to blow them out of it. A mother's risk is jooty; a soldier's is nothin' but divilmint.\*

“ Press Cuttings ” is only a clever caricature, and not a work of art. But should B. Shaw continue in this style there is sure to spring up a new style of comedy, or rather the regeneration of the old comedy of Aristophanes, which treated questions of the day like our humoristic papers do it now.

A comedy can be either romantic, sentimental, or satirical. It is evident that only the last, for its ethical character, could attract so serious a mind as B. Shaw. His satire is an outcome of the pessimistic view on human virtue while believing in the possibility of reforming humanity, *i.e.*, being an optimist concerning human future. B. Shaw's satire cuts like steel, and whatever he is criticising it is sure to be not only defeated, but rendered ridiculous. And he uses his rare and great gift to destroy and sweep away all the obstacles from humanity's way to progress, those obstacles that prevent happiness being established on the earth.

### B. SHAW ON MARRIAGE.

It is a mistake to get married; but it is a much bigger one not to.

—B. Shaw.

Already in his early novel, “ The Irrational Knot,” Nelly, speaking the thoughts of the author, describes modern marriage as “ prostitution to secure ourselves a home and an

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\* Page 18.

income.” The same Nelly speaks of Susanne Konolly as “clever, independent, successful, holding her own in the world, earning her living, fascinating a crowd of people, whilst we poor respectable nonentities sat pretending to despise her as if we were not waiting until some man in want of a female slave should offer us our board and lodging and the privilege of his lordly name with ‘Missis’ before it for our lifelong services.”\*

Here, in these early utterings we have B. Shaw’s protest against modern marriage because it means slavery to women, prostitution, while he, like Ibsen, who believes in the higher duty of women, is longing for normal relations between the sexes.

B. Shaw has the puritan’s interest in love, marriage, and sex relation. For him not love or marriage is of interest, but the result of it: the child. The continuation of the race and the development of man to superman, but not the erotic part of sex relation, is of consequence to the puritan. Love is only a trap cleverly laid before us by nature for the continuation of the race, and we are not free, we cannot act as we please, or live to our own principles, because nature takes us and uses us out to her own ends, to her means. The individual has to sacrifice himself, marriage is a sacrifice of the individual in the interest of the whole, of humanity. B. Shaw thus robs love of its poetic beauty but substitutes instead a moral one which is at least as high as the poetic. The delight in love is to him the summit of strength, of courage, the triumph of impulse over individualism, it is moral by its effects even if the basis of it is a physical one.

The interest he takes in the woman question is the result of his interest in the future race because it is through woman that the Life-Force works. The woman feels, if unconsciously, that it is her destiny to be active in the continuation of the race. But men do not want to get married at all, or at least they want to marry as late as possible, while the woman and the Life-Force want them to marry and as early as possible. That is why love is really not a sex attraction, but a sex duel, a duel in which the woman always conquers. We see this sex duel in “Widowers’ Houses,” where Trench is conquered by the

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\* Page 121.



brutish Blanche Sartorius; we see the duel in "You Never Can Tell" where Valentine is defeated by Gloria although he feels the triumph of love in him as a defect of his nature, a surrender of his individualism, and in "Man and Superman," where John Tanner knows that "we do the world's will not our own. I have a frightful feeling that I shall let myself be married because it is the world's will that you should have a husband."\*

It is natural that B. Shaw, who has shown us in the before-mentioned plays how marriage comes to be, and in "Candida" how it is, should also dedicate a whole play to the same theme. Indeed he has dedicated two plays, "Misalliance," and "Getting Married," to this question, the first of which has, unfortunately, not been published yet when I am writing these lines.

Of special interest is "Getting Married," in which advanced men and women meet to converse on the disadvantages of marriage. The occasion for this meeting is the marriage of the Bishop of Chelsea's youngest daughter. It is really no play because there is no motive in it which could absorb our interest, but dialogues in the form of Plato's. There we learn the attitude towards marriage of different men and women. Of special interest is the attitude of the Bishop himself whose views differ greatly from those of the Church of England. Next we have the old maid who would not mind having children if she could avoid the nuisance of their father. The old general with his romantic conceptions of wifehood who is in love with the spinster. There is a greengrocer who is also an alderman, a type very nearly related to the waiter William of "You Never Can Tell," and the greengrocer's sister-in-law, Mrs. George Collins, the Lady Mayor, who is a woman with a vast experience of both sexes. She delivers her message of the sex relation in a curious scene of inspiration. It is a passionate speech full of lyrical beauties, and it is this speech that makes of the "Conversation" a true work of art. She says:

"When you loved me I gave you the whole sun and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountain in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul.

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\* Page 169.



A moment only; but was it not enough? Were you not paid then for all the rest of your struggle on earth?"\*

It is only this vision that makes us approach the root of the question of sex relation. The whole play, although amusing and often brilliant, is devoted to juridical questions on divorce and so on, and criticises the iniquity of English laws concerning marriage. He demands certain reforms which are essential to the improvement of the relation between husband and wife. One of the most important of these is that divorce be made as private and easy as marriage.

But juridical questions and divorce are only special points of legislation while love and marriage are problems of general psychology. That is why "Getting Married" is more a journalistic piece of work than an artistic production.

The preface to this play is worked out into a manifesto on the marriage laws. He exposes the immorality of marriage and thus strips it of the last rag of sentimentality. In vivid colours he paints the horrors of ordinary home life and demands social independence of wife from husband.

B. Shaw believes in the superiority of women. That is why practically all his favourite characters are women. Candida, Cicely Waynflete, Barbara Undershaft are his true ideals. This superiority of women is also recognised by the young poet Marchbanks, who tells Candida's husband :

"Why should she have to choose between a wretched little nervous disease like me, and a pig-headed parson like you? Let us go on a pilgrimage; you to the east and I to the west, in search of a worthy lover for her, some beautiful archangel with purple wings."†

It is a well known fact that women possess common sense while men have greater powers of vision, are more fantastic. That is also one of the reasons why B. Shaw prefers them to men. His heroines behave like people quite conscious of their superiority over the foolish men, a point of view which many ladies share with him. They, with their common sense point of view, see the absurdity of many modern institutions of which men are proud. Women are more capable, more practical than men, that is why they always succeed in making the

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\* Page 278.

† Page 138.

men do their will, while the men believe to be following their own.

But B. Shaw does not only idealise women, and he does not only see the noble elements in them, but also their pure animal instincts. Woman is to him also a boa-constrictor that follows its prey—man. As representatives of this latter kind we have Blanche, Ann, and Cleopatra. And as their opposites the sympathetic Trench; the high-minded, clever Tanner; and the ideal man Cæsar, this clever creation of the artist B. Shaw. It is of such couples that Nietzsche said :

“Worthy and ripe for the significance of earth appeared this man unto me; but when I saw his wife earth seemed with me a mad-house.”

But it is not the woman's fault that she has to be active in the continuation of the race. It is because the men have thrown all this burden on them that they have by the law of nature to be such. “That men should put nourishment first and women children first is, broadly speaking, the law of Nature and not the dictate of personal ambition,” says B. Shaw. Although he practically shares Otto Weininger's opinion on the destiny of women, yet he does not share Weininger's hatred towards them for being such. It is the World's Will, the Will of the Life-Force, that women should be active in the continuation of the race.

B. Shaw recognises rightly that the question of love and marriage in modern society are social problems, and he strives to bring more normal relations between husband and wife by solving these problems. Because he is dissatisfied with the relations between the sexes as at present, and is longing to bring about their collaboration for the benefit of humanity and the future generations.

### *B. SHAW AND THE CENSORSHIP:*

Die Leute sind mir immer verdaechtig die-  
sich um die Tugend ihres Mitmenschen  
bekuemmern. —G. O. Knopp.

It would be impossible to write a book about B. Shaw without saying something about the censorship in England. So conspicuous and important is the war B. Shaw leads against

this obsolete institution that not to mention it would be to leave out a very important question altogether. Censorship has proved itself in all countries and at all times a most ridiculous institution. The writer of these lines, who had had some experience with the Censorship in Russia, had many proofs of its absurdities. But we must not go to Russia to see how ridiculous it is. Has not one of the English Censors made himself "famous" by the prohibition of Maeterlinck's "Monna Vanna" and other such plays?

There is already in the idea itself of giving us a policeman to keep watch over our morals, whether he be called "Reader of Plays" or "Police Inspector," something ridiculous. As if this policeman was really the standard of morality! It is not a question of person, but of institution. The influence of an autocratic censorship is as ruinous to literature as the influence of an autocrat is ruinous to government. Because such a wide power is given to a person who might by accident be a born fool or an ignorant man, and there is no end to the damage he can do.

Censorship is dangerous not only to literature, but to morality, ethics, and the welfare of the nation. It is dangerous to literature because entrust a philistine with power and he would destroy about the whole works of Byron, part of Shakespeare's, the whole of Ibsen's, and part of Maeterlinck's. Even Tolstoy would not fare better under the hands of the philistines. It is dangerous to our morality, for it is mainly owing to such philistines that immoral literature exists. Because of their throwing on one heap things great and vulgar, noble and dirty, that they make it so difficult to fight against base literature. We don't want "Readers of Plays" and Police Inspectors to uphold our morals. The only way of fighting against base literature is to educate the public and cultivate their taste for better works. A man who has enjoyed Shakespeare and Goethe, Ibsen and Maeterlinck, will no more delight in vulgar immoral literature. For the simple reason, that it is unartistic, tasteless. With regard to the abnormal people who desire to satisfy their ill-directed tastes so they will find means to do it in spite of the prohibitions. Prohibitions will never serve our purpose to this end, because so long as there is demand for certain things there is sure to be supply. The public which enjoys immoral books will find its publishers.

and the publishers will find men who write anything for money.

Another question which would be of interest to treat here is: Are the philistines right in proposing to leave out from literature everything dealing with sex relation? Also with regard to this question I must take sides against them. We see in countries and places where questions of sex relations are banished from literature that immoral literature especially flourishes. Just like for higher morals we must not go to monasteries or such institutions. Because all these places are mostly the seats of the highest immorality and most unnatural corruption.

B. Shaw has always been active to bring about a better understanding between the sexes, and his "Mrs. Warren's Profession," one of his best social dramas, came under the lash of the censor on account of its "immorality." "I cannot suppose that the morality of the censor was shocked by the appearing on the stage of a procuress," justly says B. Shaw, "because in most of our comic operas and in many melodramas procuresses appear. Probably it was the explanation that modern society drives women to become such that shocked so much the censor." It is clear from that play that B. Shaw does not defend the Mrs. Warrens, but he pleads that we should give women more possibilities to develop their abilities and a larger sphere for activity. It is a vigorous moral play in its teaching, and it must not only be publicly acted, but as far as possible encouraged and be given as a Sunday treat to all those who are too lazy to think for themselves on social questions.

Another of B. Shaw's plays that has brought him into conflict with the Censor of Plays is his "The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet." This play contains features characteristic to the work of a great pioneer of true morality, of high and sincere religiousness. That it should be prohibited by the censor for its supposed irreligiousness sounds like a joke. It is an attempt to find out traces of greatness and humanity even in the worst of characters. The whole is a scene in court and the action is taking place in the Far West. It is a place where a human life is considered of less value than a horse. One can imagine the attitude of B. Shaw, to whom life, and human life especially, is the most sacred of things, to this lynching community.



Blanco Posnet is very much related to another of B. Shaw's favourite heroes : Dick Dudgeon. Also he believes himself to be the devil's disciple. When he sees the men that are considered good in this rotten community his prayer runs like this : " Lord, keep me wicked till I die ! "

As his opposite is described his brother, the churchwarden, usurer, alcohol-dealer, and religious hypocrite. He cheats Blanco of his inheritance. Blanco sees his case lost, and leaves the place, taking with him from his brother's stable a horse which he believes to belong to his brother Daniel, but which belongs really to the Sheriff of the place. He is caught without the horse, but still they want to sentence him to death. The jury and justices are all of opinion that he should be hanged. A prostitute, Feemy Evans, is willing to swear that she saw him with the horse. Now Blanco seems to be lost. He believes that his God played him the trick and instead of letting him go away with the horse sent in his way a woman with an ill child to which he gave away the horse, thus cutting off the possibility of his own escape. At the critical moment the woman he gave the horse to, appears in court, and she saves the man who was willing to sacrifice his own life to save her child.

B. Shaw believes that there is a great power in man for doing good. Even those that believe themselves bad are truly human. The cruel Sheriff and the prostitute Feemy, who made up their minds to hang Blanco at all costs, when they understand the truth that he has given away the horse to save a child, they become converted to good.

And the child to which he was willing to sacrifice his life died all the same before the woman reached the doctor. Things are not arranged in this life for our comfort, but we are here to do the will of God, we are to create this good on earth, and there is a power in man to do good things to fulfil the will of the Creator. Also Blanco understands this idea when he confesses :

" He made me because He had a job for me ; He let me run loose till the job was ready, and then I had to come along and do it, hanging or no hanging. " \*

It is a great and powerful play, and there is a high religious



morality in it. But the censor probably supposed that "Blanco Posnet" is an attack upon religion, else he would not have made himself so ridiculous by calling it a blasphemy.

We have seen that the censorship is an obsolete, senseless, and ridiculous institution which is an obstacle to dramatic art. B. Shaw has done all in his power to discredit it before all sensible men. But there is no institution in existence, however ridiculous it may be, which should not find its champions. Also the censorship found its defenders, mostly men who are in some ways interested that the institution should exist. While B. Shaw could not help fighting against it. And not only on personal grounds, but because he is quite in earnest about morality, religiousness, and other questions important to the well-being of the nation. We must not give to any individual the right to suppress B. Shaw or Ibsen, Tolstoy or Maeterlinck, because that would be suppression of the higher morality instead of helping the majority to attain the standard of morality of Ibsen or Tolstoy.

B. Shaw has the inner belief of the true religious man. But religion is to him not churches and prayer-books, pews and pulpits, but faith, hope, humanity, life, creation. And he is dissatisfied not with religion, but with the churches which are at present means of oppression. Because they are on the side of the state and the police they certainly cannot be on the side of the poor. "Churches are suffered to exist," justly says B. Shaw, "only on condition that they preach submission of the State as at present capitalistically organised." His religion wants to establish a paradise on earth for *all* men. "Religion is a great force, the only real motive force in the world," says Hotchkiss in "Getting Married"; and to Undershaft is "religion the only subject that capable people really care for." In his religion "there are neither good men nor scoundrels," says Barbara, "there are just children of one Father; and the sooner they stop calling one another names the better." This is religion much higher than the one preached from our pulpits. Even his ethics are the product of his religiousness, of his belief in a great future for humanity, in the ultimate establishment of a paradise on earth.

As we have seen, there is no bigotry in B. Shaw, but true religiousness. He shares the religious morality of a Christ, Confucius, Zoroaster, Mahomet, Tolstoy, and others, but not

that of Gregor VII., Pope Alexander III., Ignaz Loyola, and others. It is his religiousness that makes him speak of the Salvation Army with respect, although he disapproves of its methods and of its social dealings, which seem to him blameworthy. To him it is religion that makes all the difference between the somebody and nobody, the individuals and the mob. Even his Socialism is only a variation of his religiousness and not to see it is really not seeing the substance, but the shadow of a thing.

### *THE PHILOSOPHER AND SOCIAL REFORMER.*

God has given us a world that nothing but  
our own folly keeps from being a  
paradise. —*B. Shaw.*

One cannot understand the dramatist B. Shaw if he does not know B. Shaw, the social philosopher, because B. Shaw is principally a philosopher and his works serve him as illustrations to his ideals and teachings. The main tenet of his philosophy is the sanctity of life and mankind, and it is built upon love and intercourse with humanity. He says :

“ When we come to humanity it is still the same : only by intercourse with men and women can we learn anything about it. This involves an active life, not a contemplative one ; for unless you do something in the world you can have no real business to transact with men ; and unless you love and are loved you can have no intimate relation with them.”

He is conscious of the fact that we are here not to do our own will but to fulfil some higher destiny, to do the world's, Nature's will. But the world's will is the well being of humanity ; that is why we must always be active to this end, and fulfil, without looking for excuses, this higher will.

B. Shaw is a philosopher, and the Shavian philosophy has become quite a term in England. But the materials of this philosopher are not abstract ideas, but humanity. Because his philosophy is based on his knowledge of humanity and on his belief in a higher order of things which he tries to bring about.

He, like other great reformers, is in advance of his age.

Because he sees by intuition things before other men, and realises the necessity of certain changes. But the things he desires to bring about are contrary to the established manners and customs. And whatever is such is considered by the mob as immoral. It is the mob, or, as Ibsen calls them, "the compact majority," that always misunderstands men of the highest morals and brands them as immoralists. For the ethics and morals of the reformer do not coincide with the conventions of the "pious" defenders of "morality." "Every advance in thought and conduct is by definition immoral until it has converted the majority," says B. Shaw. Again: "Every step in morals is made by challenging the validity of the existing conception of perfect propriety of conduct." That is why the highest morality of prophets, saints, and artists has been howled at by the majority and only with time they began to realise their mistakes. Indeed, the difference between the morality of the prophet and that of the ordinary man is enormous. Because the ordinary people usually work out for themselves a morality of their own which best suits their manners of life and surroundings. But the prophet who sees behind the things screened from the sight of ordinary observers soon notices the mistakes this kind of conventional morality gives rise to, and he opposes the morality which the others want to believe sacred, everlasting. There is not such a thing as a constant morality. Morality, as any other thing in the world, changes. Many things considered as moral by our fathers do not longer pass as such now.

B. Shaw's morality is in advance of his age. That is why, although of the highest kind, still it is considered by some as immorality. His whole life is the recognition of a moral theory for which he lives and works. It is the recognition of this moral theory when he says: "It is no more possible for me to do my work honestly as a playwright without giving pain than it is for a dentist. The nation's morals are like its teeth: the more decayed they are the more it hurts to touch them." And he always hurts the public because he always touches their morals. It is because of his consciousness that he has to do away with the old conventional notions and make place for new ideals.

His mission in England is that of the iconoclast. And it is bound to be such. Because so long as we are content with the

present morality, with its prisons and justices, poor laws and misery, there could surely be no change. His John Tanner, the father of the Superman, is a genius of destruction :

*Ann* : I am afraid I am too feminine to see any sense in destruction. Destruction can only destroy.

*Tanner* : Yes. That is why it is so useful. Construction cumbers the ground with institutions made by busy-bodies. Destruction clears it, and gives us breathing space and liberty.\*

B. Shaw is destructive because he wants to destroy the past in order to build with its ruins a happy and bright future. In the second act of "Cæsar and Cleopatra," at the scene of the burning library in Alexandria, he again speaks of destruction :

*Theodotus* : What is burning there is the memory of mankind.

*Cæsar* : A shameful memory, let it burn.

*Theodotus* : Will you destroy the past?

*Cæsar* : Ay, and build the future with its ruins.†

But B. Shaw is not only the destroyer of the past. He has a creating genius and even in his destruction there is construction. For we see clearly not only what he aims at, but it is pretty easy to describe the society and people he dreams of, to point out how life and society should be organised according to his ideals.

Although an idealist of the highest type he denies it in theory and has always fought conspicuously against idealism. If we put the question : What is an idealist? the answer must be : A man who wants to bring humanity to the level of his ideals, to raise mankind to his own standard. He conceives it to be to the benefit of humanity, if men will live according to his ideal and that is why he is trying to do it. In other words, the idealist wants to set up an ideal world. But that is precisely the thing B. Shaw does. And he fights against the sort of "idealism" that is idealising the things that exist at present, that makes men think of the world romantically, while B. Shaw is a true idealist himself. His dramas are of ideas and not of outward action, and it is by the ideals they embody that they will live, and be saved from oblivion.

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\* "Man and Super-Man," page 36.

† Page 135.



Also his heroes are representatives of the idealist B. Shaw. They do not exist for personal ends; but to fulfil a purpose which is more noble, infinitely greater. They consider themselves instruments of a world's will. Cæsar and Tanner, Undershaft and Barbara, recognise it. "This is not happiness," truly remarks Cleopatra, "but greatness."

He brands hypocrisy wherever he finds it in marriage, in religious, in political, and private life. He uncovers the "respectable" people and shows them in the real light, how they look like in reality. And we see that what we considered moral is in reality immoral. We see that good and evil are so intermixed in our society that we can no longer distinguish which is which. He shows that the difference between the great scoundrel, thief, robber, and millionaire is only in the treatment they receive from society, while they are really all doing the same thing. In his "First Aid to Critics" he says:

"In proof I might point to the sensational object lesson provided by our commercial millionaires to-day. They begin as brigands: merciless, unscrupulous, dealing out ruin and death and slavery to their competitors and employees, and facing desperately the worst that their competitors can do them. The history of the English factories, American trusts, the exploitation of African gold, diamonds, ivory and rubber, outdoes in villainy the worst that has ever been imagined of the buccaneers of the Spanish main."\*

Again he contends that "there are no absolute scoundrels. Every practicable man (and woman) is a potential scoundrel and a potential good citizen. What a man is depends on his character; but what he does, depends on his circumstances. The characteristic that ruins a man in one class makes him eminent in another."

He laughs at our pretence "that it is more important to be good than to be rich." To be good is to him "piously cheating, robbing, and murdering one another by doing our duty as policemen, soldiers, bailiffs, jurymen, turnkeys, hangmen, tradesmen, and curates, at the command of those who know that the golden grapes are not sour."

He is a true social reformer. Each of his plays indicates/

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\* "John Bull's Other Island" and "Major Barbara," page 173.



( the reform necessary in some department of our public life or in the state of society. His dramas expose his political, social, economical, and moral ideals. And he demands from the point of view of efficiency that we should give to every man an opportunity to use his skill and brains. He maintains that he is opposed to the existing order not on account of his idealism or sympathy with the poor, but only because he hates waste, disorder, inefficiency. He says: "Here I am, for instance, by class a respectable man, by common sense a hater of waste and disorder, by intellectual constitution legally minded to the verge of pedantry, and by temperament apprehensive and economically disposed to old-maidishness; yet I am and have always been, and shall always now be a revolutionary writer, because our laws make law impossible; our liberties destroy all freedom; our property is organised robbery; our morality is an impudent hypocrisy; our wisdom is administered by inexperienced dupes, our power wielded by cowards and weaklings, and our honour false in all points."

The disorganisation of the present society is partly the cause of human misery. And not by almsgiving and charity can we improve anything. We see that in spite of our charity societies and almsgiving, all kinds of human misery as poverty, pauperism, starvation and physical decay are always increasing. "What is necessary is a more just distribution of the wealth of the country, not that some who are producing nothing should get more than they know what to do with and those that produce everything should starve." From this follows his Socialism. "There are two things that must be set right or we shall perish like Rome, of soul atrophy disguised as empire," says B. Shaw. "The first is, that the daily ceremony of dividing the wealth of the country among its inhabitants shall be so conducted that no crumb shall go to any able-bodied adults who are not producing by their personal exertions not only a full equivalent for what they take, but a surplus sufficient to provide for their superannuation and to pay back the debt due to their nature."

"The second is that the deliberate infliction of malicious injuries which now goes on under the name of punishment be abandoned; so that the thief, the ruffian, the gambler, and the beggar may without inhumanity be handed over to the law, and made to understand that a state which is too humane to punish

will also be too thrifty to waste the life of honest men in watching or restraining dishonest ones.”

There are few examples in the whole literature of the world of such energy, brilliancy and force with which he tries to bring about the conversion of men to his ideals. It seems as if he would be enraged over the stupidity of men that prefer their present miserable existence instead of making a paradise of the world we live in. There is hardly any important question on which B. Shaw had not yet had his say. This proves what a keen interest for the welfare of humanity he has. He is the true prophet of the future England that is fighting against the England of the present.

B. Shaw has done a great deal to reform the theatre-going public. And every man unprejudiced against him must confess that it is first of all to him that we are indebted that a London audience can sit now three hours in a theatre to hear the actors on the stage discussing philosophy, ethics, sociology, and many other theoretical questions instead of melodramatic nonsense. So far has he succeeded in improving the tastes of the theatre-going public. While he made of the theatre a school of reality instead of its being a place of sensual emotion.

He is often accused of buffoonery. In the epistle to Mr. Walkley, B. Shaw says :

“ You know me in the dual, and it might be thought, antagonistic capacities of buffoon and vestryman. Let me impress it upon you that it is the vestryman and not the other that is *le vrai Shaw*. ”

The buffoonery serves him only to attract attention to his ideas. In reality, as I have often mentioned before, he is the indefatigable champion of social justice and he is always serious and sincere. It is the great sincerity of his ideals for which he works, trying to realise them, to bring them into existence, that makes him serious. While he sees with his normal eyesight through all delusions, deceptions, and hypocrisies, and detests the fatuity of his fellow men which persist in feeling instead of thinking, and fights against their conventional stupidity which they call morality. He is against all kinds of oppression, criticising everything wrong and helping to destroy things, that do not deserve to exist, while he is always advancing the cause of progress.

B. Shaw is really pessimistic with regard to his opinions on

present society. And we see no help, no escape from all the difficulties. There is no solution to the question in "Widowers' Houses," where Trench does marry Blanche, because he sees no escape from his position. We see no end to the "beautiful" profession of Mrs. Warren. There is no help to Vivien Warren because to use up all your power and strength, to kill your individuality in hard office work is no solution to the question. There is no possibility for the individual to live to his ideals when the whole basis of society is rotten.

But in spite of all evils society labours under, B. Shaw believes in its regeneration. He believes in the forces of life as opposed to the forces of death, and is an optimist concerning human future. That is what fills him with strength to work for the future of humanity, to bring about a better order of things. He is a dreamer of a future with nations of Supermen, when there will be no more poor or rich, without prisons and police, justices and hangmen, and other things essential to our sham civilisation. B. Shaw compares men to Supermen to Cæsar, Siegfried, Prometheus, and if man proves himself unequal to this standard he tries to elevate them to it. One must be a great optimist concerning human future to believe in the possibility for men to become Supermen, God-like. Because what is this Superman if not the deification of man?

B. Shaw has also chosen comedy because it is essentially an art of the future, and he is the poet and prophet of the future. Already Novalis recognised that "all exposition of the past is tragedy in the true sense, while representation of the future is comedy." And B. Shaw has always worked for the future of humanity. That is why when the time will come that the great majority will no longer have to starve in the dirty and rotten houses of the Sartoriuses, and women will no longer be forced to take up Mrs. Warren's profession, it will, to a certain extent, be due to the help the philosopher and social reformer, B. Shaw, gave to everything advanced, noble and good.

THE END.

I tell you that as long as I can conceive something better than myself I cannot be easy unless I am striving to bring it into existence or clearing the way for it. That is the law of my life.  
—*B. Shaw.*

It would be impossible to give a full and exhausting description of B. Shaw in one little volume. His works, like life itself, cannot be thoroughly described in such short space. Perhaps it is not the time yet for it. That is why all I have been trying to do is to point out some of his main ideas and to show to what ends they tend.

B. Shaw is a fighter for a better future and a critic of the present system. He has subjected to exposure and criticism religion, marriage, respectability. Thanks to his influence we have become conscious that much that we have thought morally high is base immorality. Every work of his has been a challenge to the public intended to startle and surprise. He says many shocking things. But the things are shocking not because he speaks of them, but because they exist, and no amount of hiding will help to cover them up for always and suppress the truth. That he sees things differently from the majority of his fellow countrymen is quite evident. But that is the cause of his vitality and the reason why his works awaken such a great interest. His dramas are not really inspirations, but cool brain work, worked out problems, sometimes deep, and always humorous or tragic, never indifferent. He brings on the stage a group of characters, and sets them to discuss some topic that has absorbed his attention. As a whole he takes literature and art seriously, because he is conscious that they do not exist for amusement, but for instruction.

And he shows that society based on such a fundament as the present is wholly rotten. He summons everything existing before the Court of Reason and proves that it must be swept away because it is the reverse of what we supposed it to be or what it ought to be.

No dramatist had insisted so much on the social side of life



as B. Shaw. Because he sees the whole reality as it is and does not like to fly from it to a world of fiction, but to reform it. His attitude towards society is a critical one; it seems as if he would stand above it, never mix with it; yet he does thoroughly understand it. B. Shaw does not take his principles from books, but from life, and succeeds to make himself lucid clear on all points he writes about. His dialogue does not only illustrate the situation and action, but also the person. That is why his drawing of characters is such a masterpiece and really unsurpassed. With the clear sight of the great master he sees the whole person he represents. His heroes are therefore so imposing, you feel that they are individualities, men of consequence. All of them are of the active type, only two of them, Eugen Marchbanks and Peter Keegan, being romantic dreamers. But these are of such extraordinary lyrical beauty that they stand singularly in the whole literature of modern romanticism.

The works of B. Shaw are of such great interest that I entertain no doubt that even many years afterwards when the things against which he fought will become reminiscences of the past his works will still be perused with pleasure. Not only because much of our present life is reflected in them, but for their artistic qualities. And men will delight in his charming descriptions of the things that were, just like we do in the works of Molière, Swift, Fielding, Richardson, and Dickens, although many of the things against which they wrote have passed already into eternity.

In "Major Barbara" Undershaft asks Cusins: "Dare you make war on war?" But B. Shaw has dared to do it, as he dared many another thing. This puritan, vegetarian, antivivisectionist and anti many things, has dared to make war not only against war, but against everything adored in the present society. But he does not fight against these things by appealing to our humanity like Tolstoy did, but by ridiculing everything base. He has ridiculed war by showing that it is not heroism but cowardice that makes men fight. That is why he will exercise more influence on humanity than other moralists, although men will not confess it. Because by ridiculing them he touches their vanity and he will influence where an ordinary appeal would not do. He is the true satirist of the evil of his time while his ideal is a happy humanity.



B. Shaw, like his hero Cusins, is smithing arms for the poor and oppressed in order to enable them to overthrow the present society. That is why he makes Cusins say :

“ I now want to give the common man weapons against the intellectual man. I love the common people. I want to arm them against the lawyer, the doctor, the priest, the literary man, the professor, the artist, and the politician, who when once in authority, are the most dangerous, disastrous, and tyrannical of all the fools, rascals, and impostors. I want a democratic power strong enough to force the intellectual oligarchy to use its genius for the general good or else perish.”\*

He is extraordinarily simple and extraordinarily complicated. That is why he must not be justified or accused, but first of all studied and understood, a thing seldom done by most of his critics. Everything he does is only out of pure love for humanity. He is active in different branches of social life, working hard for the welfare of his fellow men on earth. Indeed the whole life of the great dramatist is devoted “ to the raising of hell to heaven and of man to God, through the unveiling of an eternal light in the Valley of the Shadow.”

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I use this opportunity to thank Prof. Dr. Ed. Müller-Hess, of the University of Berne, for the suggestions and kind help he gave me during my studies with him.

I also express my most hearty thanks to Dr. H. Odier, Editor of the “ Express de Genève,” for his kindly allowing me the perusal of his interesting paper on B. Shaw and some of the works of the author who interests us both so much.

L. S.

*Berne, July, 1912.*

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\* “ Major Barbara,” page 289.

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